

FirstGlimpse®

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Sleek, Stunning & Shockingly Affordable

Insignia's 50-inch 720p Plasma HDTV
will push your TV viewing experience to new
heights with excellent picture and sound.
Find out more on page 8!



FEATURED ARTICLE: Home-Theater Accents & Accessories p. 14

HOME THEATER

Blu-ray vs.
HD DVD:
What's The Difference?

p. 17

DIGITAL IMAGING

Three Popular
D-SLRs,
Compared

p. 38

COMPUTERS

Can't-Miss
Computing
Accessories

p. 55

WIRELESS

Which GPS
Model Works
For You?

p. 69



All This &
More In The
Next Issue Of
First Glimpse!

Issues Available
Feb. 8, 2008

Turn Your TV Experience Up A Notch

Find Out How To Turn Your "TV Room" Into A Spectacular
Home Theater In The March Issue Of *First Glimpse*

Articles Include:

- The Perfect TV For Different Room Types
- Take Your Audio To Another Level
- Home-Theater Furniture 101

Also:

- The Bold & The Beautiful: A Look At High-end HDTVs
- More Than Just Boxes: What You Need To Know About Disc Players & DVRs



On Our Cover: Featured on our cover this month is Insignia's 50-inch 720p Flat-Screen Plasma HDTV.

Cover Story

8 Go Big
Get More Home Theater For
Your Money

*Build an entire home-theater system
for the cost of a high-end HDTV.*

Open

There's always something new and interesting happening in the world of consumer electronics. You'll hear about it all in *First Glimpse's* Open section.

11 CE News

Home Theater

Everyone wants a sleek, stylish HDTV to accent his or her home, but many folks just don't know where to start when it comes to actually buying one. Whether you're looking for a glossary of terms, shopping tips, or must-have accessories, check out Home Theater for quick tips on making your hi-def experience the best it can be.

- 14 Accents & Accessories**
Your Theater Is More Than A Widescreen TV
- 17 Blu-ray Disc vs. HD DVD**
What's The Difference?
- 18 Your Dream Home Theater**
Piecing Together A Masterpiece
- 20 True Or False?**
Musical Myths Regarding Surround-Sound Systems
- 22 Home Theater Shopping Tips**
A Rear-Projection HDTV
- 23 Plasma & LCD TVs**
What's The Difference?
- 24 HDTVs**
5 Must-Have Accessories
- 25 Buying An HDTV**
Top 5 Things To Know
- 26 Your Home Theater Go-To Guys**
Best Buy's Geek Squad Home Theater Installation Services
- 27 to 33 HDTV Comparison Charts**
Technology; LCD; Plasma; Rear projection
- 34 HDTV Glossary**

Digital Imaging

Digital cameras and camcorders are changing the way we record the moments of our lives, from quick snapshots of favorite vacation spots to priceless video clips of first steps and other important milestones. Get to know your new digicam or camcorder and learn what to do with your photos and video once you have them in our Digital Imaging section.

- 35** **Accents & Accessories**
Useful Add-Ons For Your Digital Camera
- 38** **Your Best Shot**
We Compare Three Popular D-SLRs
- 40** **Camera Conundrums**
Answers To Your Digital Camera Questions
- 42** **Spanning The Spectrum**
Focal Lengths Explained
- 43** **Digital Imaging Shopping Tips**
A D-SLR Lens
- 44** **Digital Cameras**
5 Must-Have Accessories
- 45** **Digital Cameras**
Top 5 Things To Know
- 46 to 53** **Digital Imaging Comparison Charts**
Digital Cameras; D-SLRs; Digital Camcorders; Photo Printers
- 54** **Digital Imaging Glossary**



Computers

Whether you love 'em or hate 'em, almost everyone uses a computer sometime during his or her day, and even if you don't, chances are your spouse or kids do. In this section, you can familiarize yourself even more with this ubiquitous CE device, and we'll also lighten things up a bit with monthly comparisons of the hottest notebook and desktop computers.

- 55** **Accents & Accessories**
It's The Little Things That Mean So Much
- 58** **Computer Shopping Tips**
Buying A Notebook Bag
- 59** **Notebooks**
5 Must-Have Accessories
- 60** **Computers**
Top 5 Things To Know
- 61** **Glossary Of Computing Terms**
- 62 to 65** **Computer Comparison Charts**
Notebooks; Desktop Bundles



Wireless

We're willing to bet that you can't part with your cell phone or iPod—or both! In this section, we'll tell you everything you need to know about wireless devices such as GPS devices, and we also cover MP3 players and the cool accessories that go with them. If you love the feeling of freedom you get with no wires or cords, this section is for you.

- 66** **Accents & Accessories**
Beauty & Spice To Make Your Music Player Nice
- 69** **Outfit Your Car With A GPS Device**
Find The Direction You Want To Go
- 71** **Deck Out Your iPod**
Choose The Perfect Accessories For Your Lifestyle
- 72** **Wireless Shopping Tips**
Find The Perfect iPod For You
- 73** **MP3 Players**
5 Must-Have Accessories
- 74** **MP3 Players**
Top 5 Things To Know



75 MP3 Player Glossary

76 to 79 Wireless Comparison Charts
MP3 Players; GPS Devices

CE Lite

Most CE devices are all about fun. Check out each month's Exit page for cool gift ideas for loved ones—and for yourself.

80 Exit



Editor's Note

Oftentimes, it's easy to overlook the oodles of accents and accessories you can purchase for your CE device. There are so many to choose from! In this issue, we hope to give you a better idea of what products can help improve your existing home theater, digital camera, computer, or digital music player. Whether you're looking for a sleek accent, such as a dark-stained HDTV stand, or need a practical accessory, such as a high-capacity memory card for your point-and-shoot camera, we've got you covered.

As for me, I'm scoping out different options to help satisfy my husband's "need" to build a great home-theater experience without breaking the bank. Our February cover features the Insignia 50-inch 720p Plasma HDTV. United with the right speaker system, disc player, and top-of-the-line cables, anyone can create a home theater that'll make others envious—and at or below the

cost of a high-end HDTV. Insignia's 50-inch HDTV has really caught my eye, and it certainly puts our current 19-inch, flat-screen tube TV to shame. I'm thinking perhaps we'll make that living room upgrade a little sooner than expected.



Ashley Kumpula

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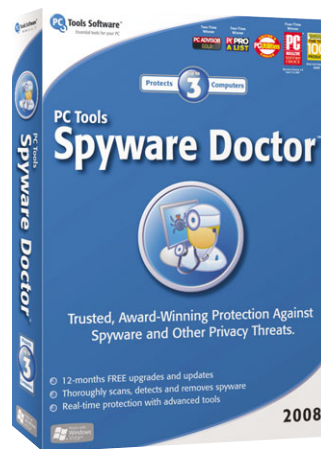
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First Glimpse Special Product Section

This special product section is produced in partnership with leading consumer electronics manufacturers and allows us to provide readers with the most timely product information possible. Browse through these *First Glimpse* pages to learn about the latest hot products.

Klipsch Quintet SL Home Theater System	5
IOGEAR Wireless USB Hub & Adapter	6
PC Tools Spyware Doctor	7





**Klipsch Quintet™ SL
Home Theater System**
MSRP: \$1,449 (as shown)
www.klipsch.com
Available at select Best Buy™
stores and www.bestbuy.com



Thrill Your Soul

A perfect match for flat-panel TVs, Klipsch's new 5-channel Quintet SL surround-sound package is built for passion, excitement, and intrigue. By applying the same cutting-edge technology as the company's professional cinema products, this system lets you experience everything your music and movies have to offer. So, don't let its flat and fabulous design fool you. A sheer brute strength lies hidden within the Quintet's elegant cabinets, and it's called the Tractrix® Horn. This exclusive technology reproduces a more genuine, lifelike sound and ensures every whisper of dialogue or wailing chorus is heard cleanly and accurately. And if it's more low-frequency power you crave, the company's optional Sub-12 subwoofer gets the hard-hitting job done. No one gets you closer to reality than Klipsch, no one.

Features include:

- Three left/center/right speakers and two surround satellites
- Horn-loaded technology delivers lifelike performances
- High-output woofers deliver room-filling bass
- Highly efficient, so it produces more output using less energy
- Clean, modern design fits any living environment
- Great for wall mounting or placement on a shelf
- 5-channel Quintet SL package retails for \$950
- Recommended Sub-12 subwoofer sold separately for \$499



FirstGlimpse®

Special Product Section

IOGEAR Wireless USB Hub & Adapter

MSRP: \$199.95

www.iogear.com

Available at select Best Buy™ stores
and www.bestbuy.com



Freedom To Roam

Free yourself from USB cables and allow your PC to wirelessly communicate with USB-connected peripherals, such as printers, scanners, digicams, game controllers, flash drives, external hard drives, and more, with IOGEAR's USB-IF-certified Wireless USB Hub solution. This kit takes advantage of the Multiband OFDM UWB 1.0 specification, which is 10 times faster than a regular 802.11b network and avoids interference with other wireless devices such as mobile phones, Wi-Fi networks, and cordless home phones. It provides users with transmission speeds of up to 480Mbps within a 30-foot range with convenient Plug-and-Play USB capabilities, low laptop power consumption, and backward compatibility with USB 1.1 and 2.0 standards. The multiple user switching process makes it simple to wirelessly stream audio, video, and other high-bandwidth data among various devices simply by selecting an assigned button.

Features include:

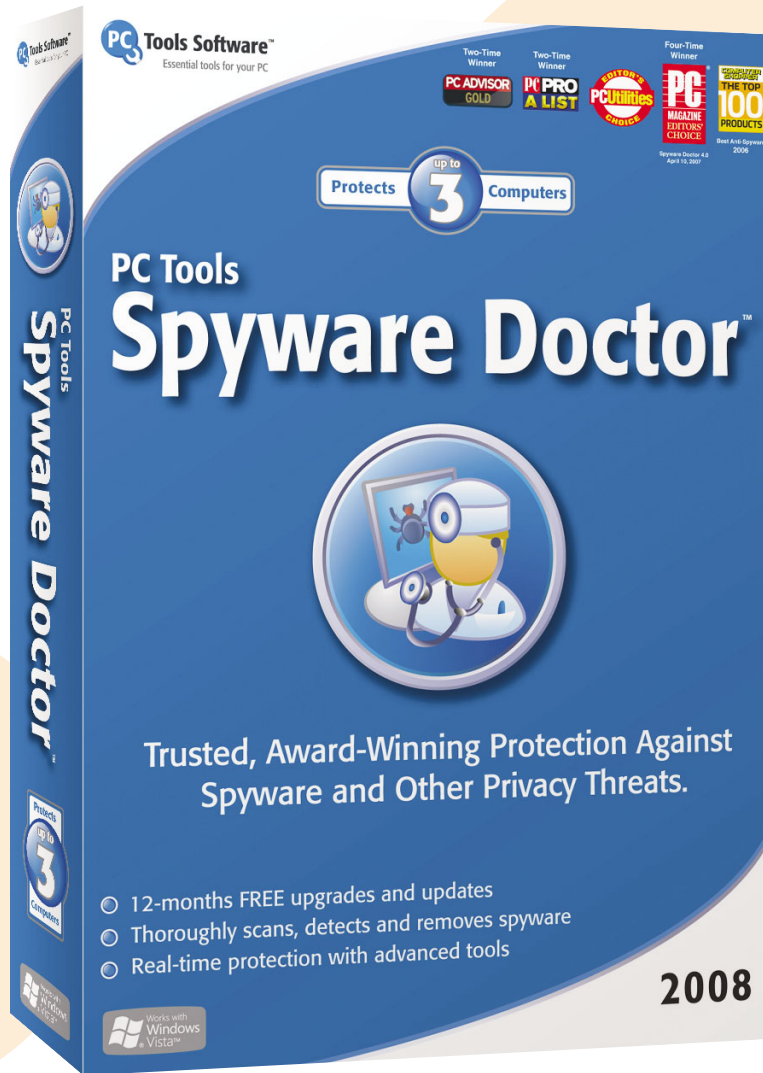
- Compatible with USB 1.1 and 2.0 devices and guarantees connectivity with all future Certified Wireless USB products
- Multiple user switching process allows for fast sharing
- Utilizes the large UWB wireless spectrum, which improves speed and reduces wireless interference with other wireless devices
- Low laptop power consumption
- Eliminates desk clutter
- Wireless connectivity up to 30 feet from the hub
- Light, small unit at 1.1 pounds and 6.1 x 6.3 x 9.84 inches (HxWxD)
- Works with Windows XP/Vista



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Special Product Section

PC Tools Spyware Doctor
MSRP: \$29.95
www.pctools.com/spyware-doctor
Available at select Best Buy™ stores
and www.bestbuy.com



Award-Winning Spyware Protection At A Great Price

Spyware can pose a serious risk to your PC, as well as your privacy, so it's wise to invest in antispyware protection. Spyware Doctor uses state-of-the-art spyware and adware detection and blocking technology to ensure that your PC is safe. With Spyware Doctor's system scans, you can detect and remove the most advanced threats before they can damage your PC. Spyware Doctor features intelligent, automatic protection, which makes the software simple for anyone to use, and it's offered at an affordable price.

Features include:

- Detects, removes, and blocks spyware and adware threats
- Recommended by experts globally
- Daily updates to ensure you are always protected
- Easiest to use with intelligent, automatic protection
- FREE customer support for all users

PC Tools Software
Essential tools for your PC

Go Big

Get More Home Theater For Your Money



ou've researched the benefits of a flat-panel TV. You've measured your entertainment center furniture to make sure it can handle

the extra-wide screen. And for the past few years, you've waited—watching the screen sizes increase as the prices dropped. There's never been a better time than now to buy a flat-panel TV, and thanks to several lesser-known brands that are wooing customers with low price points, your budget likely accommodates a bigger TV than you expected when you first decided to switch from your old CRT to a flat panel.

Best Buy's own Insignia 50-inch 720p Flat-Panel Plasma HDTV is a perfect example of a value-priced TV that gives you plenty of screen real estate. "A lot of consumers shop televisions based on size," says Andre Sam, Best Buy BlueShirt store manager. "They want something that's going to be a statement piece in the room in which they're placing the television. The 50-inch is definitely a statement piece."

Whereas a top-of-the-line TV from Sony or other popular brands may run you up to \$6,000, the Insignia Plasma HDTV provides quality and size at a strikingly lower price. With a price tag of \$1,299.99, the Insignia Plasma HDTV lets you buy all the components you need to create a stunning home theater—for less than you'd spend on a top-shelf TV.

Flatter Is Better

If you're upgrading from a CRT, you'll find that the Insignia Plasma HDTV solves two problems at once. For one

thing, it's a flat-panel TV, which means that it consumes much less space than your old, bulky television (in fact, Best Buy's Geek Squad can even mount the TV directly to your wall). More

importantly, the TV has a built-in HDTV tuner, which ensures that it will weather upcoming technology changes as over-the-air TV providers switch to high-definition feeds. The TV also supports



high-definition cable TV and content from Blu-ray and HD DVD players.

The Insignia Plasma HDTV offers a big, bright picture, thanks to a 15,000:1 **contrast ratio** (a measurement that compares the brightness of white colors to the darkness of black colors) and its 50-inch screen. It supports the standard 16:9 widescreen aspect ratio, but it can also switch to 4:3 and Zoom modes when you want to watch TV that doesn't adhere to the new widescreen format.



Insignia 50-inch 720p
Flat-Panel Plasma HDTV
\$1,299.99 • www.bestbuy.com

You can experience theater-like surround sound by connecting the Insignia Plasma HDTV to a discrete sound system that has six or more speakers (including a subwoofer), but the TV's built-in 20W speaker system can hold its own if you decide to skip the sound system. "It has a volume limiter," says Sam. "You know how sometimes you're watching a movie and then the commercial comes on and the commercial starts blaring extremely loud? This will allow you an opportunity to not have that happen. So it's perfect for watching television at night."

Setting up the Insignia Plasma HDTV is a breeze: You simply slide off the upper portion of the box and then lift the TV onto your entertainment center shelf. The TV has a built-on stand, but Best Buy's Geek Squad can remove the stand and attach the TV to a VESA-compatible wall mount in your home. Because the TV has an array of input and output ports, you won't have any trouble connecting it to all of your other home-theater devices. The Insignia Plasma HDTV boasts two future-ready HDMI ports, as well as two sets of component video ports and an optical digital audio port, among others.

Complete Your Home Theater

This is a great time to upgrade your other home-theater components. A new speaker system can provide big sound to match that large HD picture, and the latest DVD players offer the high-definition video resolution that your new Insignia Plasma HDTV supports. With a completely new home theater in your living room, and incorporating devices such as these from Best Buy, you can make the most of your HDTV.

HTB. Many customers opt for the HTB (home theater in a box) because it has every component you need to create a home theater (TV and video cables aside). The Philips DVD Home Theater

System HTS3555/37 (\$228.99) features a DVD player, a receiver, and six speakers (including a subwoofer). The Philips HTB also features upconvert technology that helps it boost the quality of your standard DVDs to near-high-definition video. The system can also play music from CDs, digital music files, and iPods.

High-definition player. There are two major players in the world of high-definition DVD formats: Blu-ray Disc and HD DVD. If you're looking for an entry-level Blu-ray player, check out Sony's BDP-S300 Blu-ray Disc Player (\$399.99), which offers full support for the Insignia Plasma HDTV's 720p resolution. If you're an HD DVD fan, take a look at the Toshiba HD-A30 HD DVD High Definition DVD Player (\$399.99). Both devices have upconvert technology.

Receiver and speakers. Be sure to invest in a receiver and speakers if you buy a Blu-ray or HD DVD player. Unlike HTBs, standalone DVD players don't have built-in receivers. Pair the Insignia NS-R5100 500W 5.1-Channel A/V Home Theater Receiver (\$154.99) with JBL's stylish SCS500.5 5.1-channel speaker system (\$599) to create a powerful audio experience that supports your Blu-ray or HD DVD player. The receiver has all the ports you'll need to connect it to your high-definition player, and the speakers feature a powerful subwoofer.

Cables. "Not all cables are created equal, so don't spare on your cables," Sam says. "You can actually have an entry-level product, and if you use better cables, you'll get better performance from the product." Look for shielded cables, which protect against signal quality reduction. The Rocketfish 8-foot HDMI Cable (\$79.99), for example, has a copper braid and double-layer Mylar foil shield.

Delivery & Installation

Not surprisingly, many customers find that the Insignia Plasma HDTV doesn't



Insignia 50-inch 720p
Flat-Panel Plasma HDTV
\$1,299.99 • www.bestbuy.com

fit in their cars. To that end, Best Buy offers a delivery service that can safely transport the TV directly to your living room. When you choose the delivery service option, Best Buy immediately schedules the delivery for a specific day. The distribution center then calls to give you a two-hour window for the scheduled delivery day. Best Buy's Geek Squad installation team can perform a range of installations, from basic setup to mounting your new Insignia Plasma HDTV and hiding other cables inside your walls.

Best Buy's Geek Squad can also calibrate your HDTV during the installation. Because manufacturers configure TVs to display under retail store lighting, the Insignia Plasma HDTV (and any other television) won't offer its best perfor-

mance in your home's softer lighting until someone calibrates the TV. "It's going to adjust all the gray tone scales throughout the picture, and it's also going to adjust the other color spectrums so it's giving you true color," says Sam.

Protect Your Investment

Don't forget to pick up a heavy-duty surge protector. This oft-overlooked accessory protects your TV and other home-theater equipment from the power fluctuations that can reduce your TV's performance or even wreck it. Check out Best Buy's selection of specialized surge protectors, such as the Panamax 10-Outlet Power Conditioner/Surge Protector (\$199.98), which protects the TV's picture quality and stops extreme voltage spikes.

Finally, protect your wallet with a Best Buy Service Plan. "For something like this, it's definitely worth having a service plan," says Sam. "The thing about high-definition televisions is that when something isn't right, it's a lot easier to see it because it's reading so much information."

A multiyear Service Plan covers parts and labor and protects you beyond the manufacturer's one-year warranty. "Anything that's a flat panel above a 25-inch, we actually go out to the home and we service the product," Sam continues. "And if we're not able to service the product, then we replace it."

With a Service Plan in your desk drawer, you can kick back and enjoy your new home theater, worry-free. **FC**

ce news

COMPILED BY JENNIE SCHLUETER

Palm Centro Helps Keep It Together

Many busy mobile users have jumped aboard the email-on-the-go bandwagon. No longer content to talk with others while out and about, many users now expect to also be able to send and receive email messages to stay in touch with others. There are plenty of devices that give users this freedom, but some of them require users to choose between size and functionality. A device that is capable of doing it all is often too big and bulky to be easy to use on the road. And devices that are travel-friendly are not always as well-equipped to handle the mobile email and surfing tasks users now demand.

The Palm Centro is designed to offer the best of both worlds. Available at Best Buy, the Centro (\$399; \$99.99 with two-year contract; www.palm.com) is a small and light Palm OS device with a full keyboard so users don't have to sacrifice functionality for portability. Productivity software helps users manage contacts, calendars, and to-do lists. The keyboard and email, text, IM, and Web capabilities help users stay in touch from anywhere.



Verizon Opens Its Network

If you believe the commercials, cellular service is all about the network. Verizon has always touted its network as being the best, and soon just about anyone will be able to use it. The company is opening its network so that any cell phone that works with Verizon's CDMA (Code-Division Multiple Access) cellular networking technology will work on the company's network. This means that all the phones available at your local Best Buy that work with the CDMA technology will eventually work on Verizon's network.

It will take some time to sort out all the regulations in this new plan; Verizon hopes to have all the kinks worked out by the end of 2008. Under the new system, cell phone users would also be able to use any application on their devices that they want. Industry experts agree that this is a step in the right direction but caution that all the network carriers will have to eventually adopt this system in order for an open network system to become a reality.



iHome Offers Updates To The iHome iH9

Taking customer feedback to heart, iHome delivers the iH9 Dual Alarm Clock Radio (\$99.99; www.ihomeaudio.com), an updated version of the award-winning iH8 clock radio for the iPod. The new iH9 features a sleeker, more user-friendly cabinet design and comes with a remote that lets you control both the unit and the iPod. New alarm settings let you create customized iPod playlists that can serve as wake-up calls on different days and at different times. If you prefer, the old standby AM/FM radio or buzzer alarm options are there, as well.

As in previous models, the iH9 will charge your iPod while it's docked. Included in the box are a wall power adapter, three dock adapters, an auxiliary audio cable, and an infrared remote. The iH9 is compatible with the iPod 4G, 5G, classic, mini, nano, and touch models.



Dial For Directions Goes Nationwide

Do you hate stopping to ask for directions? You'll no longer have to weigh the merits of stopping at the questionable roadside gas station against the possibility of driving around for another couple of hours. Instead, just use the MapQuest-by-phone-call service from Dial Dir-ect-ions (www.dialdirections.com). The free service was first made available last July in several major metropolitan areas in the United States and is now available to everyone in the country.

Here's how it works: Simply key in D-I-R-E-C-T-I-O-N-S (347/328-4667) on your cell phone's keypad. Tell the voice-activated service where you are and where you want to go. The service will send you a text message with MapQuest driving directions so you can be on your way. Dial Dir-ect-ions' service works from any cell phone and doesn't require GPS technology or a monthly subscription.

Number Of U.S. Wireless Subscribers Passes 250 Million Mark

Ten years ago, it was a bit of a novelty to see someone with a cell phone, but these days, just the opposite is true. People everywhere are driving, walking, and even working out with cell phones. A recent report from CTIA—The Wireless Association makes clear what most of us already knew: More and more Americans are using wireless phones.

The report states that the total estimated number of wireless subscribers in the United States officially passed the 250 million mark as of November 2007. That number represents an increase of 352% from the 55 million subscribers estimated a decade ago at the end of 1997. Industry experts attribute part of the wireless market's success to strong competition, innovation, and consumer value. Different plans and providers ensure that consumers can get varying technologies at varying price points so that almost anyone can afford to go wireless.

Wireless On The Rise

January 1985	91,600
December 1987	1,230,855
December 1992	11,032,753
December 1997	55,312,293
December 2002	140,766,842
November 2007	250,000,000

Survey Reveals IM Trends

The second annual AP-AOL Instant Messaging Trends Survey reveals that more instant messaging users are communicating with their mobile phones. The online survey included the IM trends and usage habits of 1,246 respondents between Oct. 25 and Nov. 4, 2007. The findings show that 25% of survey participants send IMs from their cell phones. Instant messaging also proved to be popular at work, with 27% of survey respondents saying they use IM at work.

The rise of instant messaging on different devices and in varying environments can be attributed to several factors. For one thing, more mobile phones now include full keyboards to make sending IMs easier. And all major IM services allow users to forward their messages to a mobile device. Many users are also sending IMs from within social networking sites, such as Facebook.

Teen IM Usage Habits

55% have used IM to get help with homework
22% have used IM to ask for or accept a date
70% send more IMs than emails
42% upload photos while sending IMs

tidbits



Best Buy's online traffic grew by 292% to 1.8 million visitors compared with the previous

week on **Black Friday 2007**.

Source: Nielsen Online

U.S. unit sales of front-projection TVs

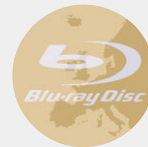
with a native 720p resolution increased 43% from the second to third quarter in 2007, accounting for 40% of the total front-projector market in the period.

Source: Quixel Research



73% of all high-definition movies sold in Europe in 2007 were in the **Blu-ray Disc** format.

Source: Media Control GfK International [as reported by Reuters]



43% of teen IM users admit they have used

instant mes-

saging to say something they wouldn't say to someone in person.

Source: AP-AOL Instant Messaging Trends Survey



41.7% of shoppers during the post-Thanksgiving 2007 holiday shopping week-end bought

books, CDs, videos, video games, and DVDs.

Source: NRF (National Retail Federation)

Accents & Accessories

Your Theater Is More Than A Widescreen TV

When you kick back with a movie, your home theater is your cocoon. Naturally, you want it to have more charm and amenities than the average crackerbox at the multiplex. Let's say your primary components—HDTV and media players—are in place. Now let's fill in the rest.

First, there are the accents, such as the perfect TV stand or wall mount, and media cabinets that put the home in home

theater. Next, there are accessories. These may not be the stars of the showplace, but they play important support roles. Products, such as cabling and components, extend functionality and help you get optimal performance out of your system. Last, you'll want items that protect it all.

Here are eight great possibilities to start with. **FG**

BY BRIAN HODGE

BDI Icon 9424 TV Stand \$745 • www.bdiusa.com

When choosing an HDTV stand, it ultimately comes down to two aesthetic choices: warm and woody or sleek and gleaming. The Icon 9424 falls in the latter camp, with a steel framework available in silver satin and glossy black finishes. It will hold an HDTV sized 30 to 50 inches and up to 120 pounds. Two adjustable tempered glass shelves can hold another combined 125 pounds of components.

Perfect For: HDTV owners looking for a sleek, stylish stand.



Klipsch Quintet III Microsystem \$500 • www.klipsch.com

If you prefer a surround-sound system that blends unobtrusively into your decor but worry that small speakers will mean wimpy audio, have no fear. The Quintet III's 5 speakers deliver both sound and subtlety. The left and right front and surround speakers stand just 8.3 inches tall and 5 inches wide, yet they can handle up to 200 watts of power each, so they'll get plenty loud while maintaining clean, clear sonic detail. As an added bonus, their bases swivel back for easy wall mounting.

Perfect For: Home-theater owners who want great sound quality in a small package.





Klipsch Synergy Sub-10 Subwoofer

\$400 • www.klipsch.com

Although Klipsch's Quintet III provides all the full-range speakers required for a 5.1 surround system, you'll still need the "1" in 5.1. Klipsch recommends the Synergy Sub-10 for use with the Quintet III. A subwoofer delivers the low-end beef to fill out an audio system's frequency range, and the Sub-10's frequency response digs down to 28Hz, where sounds are felt more than heard. With up to 420 watts of power, it packs a solid wallop during even the most kinetic action sequences.

Perfect For: Klipsch Quintet III owners after the ideal subwoofer to round out their sound system.



Rockefish 4' HDMI Cable

\$64.99 • www.bestbuy.com

If you're investing in the latest high-definition components, it makes sense to connect them with cables designed to keep digital signals as pristine as possible. This premium cable uses 24k gold contacts to help resist corrosion, and the Mylar shields protect the signals from outside interference. The cables include a clip to help tame the mass of cables and cords behind your home-theater equipment.

Perfect For: Users who demand the best possible cables for their video and audio signals.



Panamax M4300-PM Rack-Mountable Power Conditioner/Surge Protector

\$299.95 • www.panamax.com

Home theaters need a surge protector to shield the system from damage due to power spikes and lightning strikes. Discerning owners use a power conditioner to smooth out current fluctuations and filter out electrical line noise; this can provide a clearer picture and audio free of hiss, hum, and other noise. The M4300-PM is an elegant answer to both needs. With nine outlets, there's plenty of room for your HDTV, media players, and sound system. Plus, it lets you keep all those power cords off of the floor.

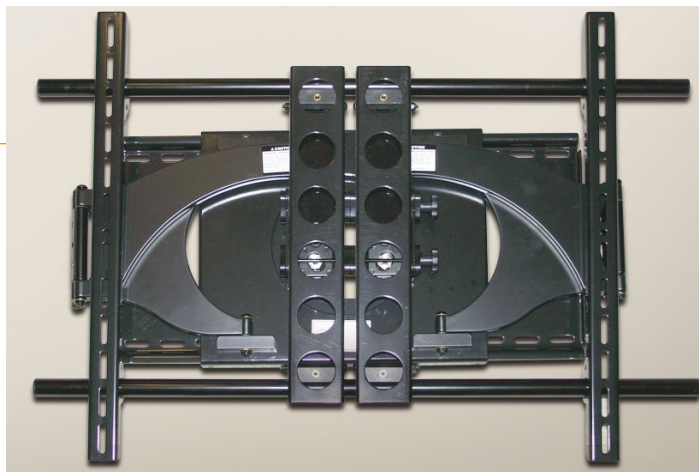
Perfect For: Protecting expensive home-theater components.

Sanus Systems VisionMount VMDD26 Universal Wall Mount

\$619.99 • www.sanus.com

Hanging your plasma or LCD HDTV on the wall is an efficient use of space, and it looks great. Unfortunately, some wall mounts don't let you adjust the viewing angle. The VisionMount VMDD26 provides far more flexibility. It holds most flat-panel sets between 42 and 63 inches and up to 175 pounds. It also uses two hinged arms, so you can pull your HDTV away from the wall by up to 25.75 inches and then swivel it as you please.

Perfect For: Home-theater enthusiasts who want to be able to easily reposition their flat-panel HDTV whenever they need to.



SpeakerCraft S4VC 4-Zone Speaker Selector With Volume Control

\$350 • www.speakercraft.com

You probably use your home entertainment center for music and radio, too. With the S4VC, you can route stereo output from your receiver to as many as four pairs of speakers installed in other rooms. The S4VC even provides independent on/off and volume control for each pair. It handles up to 125 watts per channel, so your audio will always come through loud and clear.

Perfect For: Music lovers with other rooms wired for sound.



Universal Remote Control MX-350 Complete Control Universal Remote

\$149 • www.universalremote.com

The more components you have in your home theater, the more remote controls you'll find taking over your coffee table. With the MX-350, you can retire 10 remotes, including those for your TV, receiver, DVD players, and cable box. The MX-350 is plenty rugged and even operates through walls. You can also program it with macro commands—for instance, using a single click to fire up the TV, receiver, and favorite channel and then set the sound system's volume to your preferred level.

Perfect For: Anyone who hungers for one remote to rule them all.



Blu-ray Disc vs. HD DVD

What's The Difference?



Blu-ray Disc and HD DVD players are currently battling for dominance in the same way that VHS and Betamax players did nearly three decades ago. Here we'll compare the pros and cons of both Blu-ray Disc and HD DVD.

Capacity. BDs (Blu-ray Discs) can hold up to 25GB of data on a single-layer disc or 54GB of data on a dual-layer disc. In contrast, an HD DVD can only hold up to 15GB on a single-layer disc or 30GB on a dual-layer disc. Blu-ray Discs can hold up to 8.5 hours of HD content, but HD DVDs can only provide up to 5.1 hours of HD content. The main reason for the differences is that Blu-ray Discs have a tighter spiraling ring of recorded data than HD DVDs do.

Optical coating. It's important that your discs can hold up against small scratches. BDs and HD DVDs both have a protective layer, called an optical coating, over the disc's data layer. HD DVDs provide protection for recorded content by placing 0.6mm between the outside surface of the disc and the data layer. In contrast, Blu-ray Discs have only 0.1mm between the outer layer and the recorded content. However, Blu-ray Discs have a protective, hard coating to further protect the disc from scratches and other damage.

Interactive content. Many HD DVDs have interactive content, such as games, picture-in-picture, downloadable online content, and the ability to bookmark specific points on the disc to play again later. Blu-ray Discs also support interactive content, but you

won't find as many players or BDs that support such content.

This is because HD DVD uses HDi (HD interactive), a format that incorporates technologies that are already familiar to Web developers and designers, such as HTML, CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), and JavaScript. Blu-ray Disc uses a new technology, BD-J (Blu-ray Disc Java), instead. Companies incorporated HDi's technologies into discs and players faster because they were familiar to content developers. Starting Oct. 31, 2007, all BD players are required to support BD-J, so this should speed the development and release of interactive content for BD players, but it may still take a while for Blu-ray's interactive content to catch up with HD DVD's.

Price. In general, Blu-ray Disc players cost more than HD DVD players. For example, it's clear from the cost of various players at Best Buy that the average Blu-ray Disc player costs more than the average HD DVD player. At press time, you can find an HD DVD player, the Toshiba HD-A3, as low as \$299.99, but Blu-ray Disc players start at about \$500. For example, Panasonic's DMP-BD30K costs \$499, as does Samsung's BD-P1400/X. Other players, such as Sony's BDP-S500 (\$699.99), which supports BD-J, run a bit higher. You'll also find the LG Super Blu BH200, a two-in-one HD DVD *and* BD player that supports both formats and also both HDi and BD-J interactive technologies. Be aware, though, that this player costs more (\$999.99) than both the Toshiba HD DVD player and the Samsung Blu-ray Disc player combined. **FG**

BY KYLEE DICKEY

Your Dream Home Theater

Piecing Together A Masterpiece



Can you picture it? That perfect home theater may exist only in your mind, but you can turn it into reality. There's a world of exciting audio/visual entertainment ahead; let this article be your guide.

HDTV

The starting point for any serious home theater is a serious high-definition TV. Flat-panel HDTVs get most of the attention these days, but for exquisitely good video quality and a huge screen, take a look at a Sony SXRD rear-projection set. The 60-inch model KDS-60A3000 (\$2,199.99;

www.sonystyle.com) features world-class color and contrast, not to mention abyssal darks that retain their crisp detail.

Sony's Motionflow 120Hz and CineMotion are television technologies that attempt to smooth and stabilize motion in both film- and video-based content. Meanwhile, the BRAVIA EX

video processing engine helps sharpen lower-quality video.

This mammoth movie machine features three HDMI inputs and an optical sound output, along with the other usual connection suspects. Factor in a great HD over-the-air channel tuner, Sony's x.v.Color technology (which allows for additional, deeper hues), and



Logitech Harmony 890 remote
\$349.99
www.logitech.com

built-in speakers with Dolby Digital support and simulated surround sound, and you've got one heck of an HDTV.

Audio

Of course, few of us would settle for a big HDTV's built-in speakers in a real home theater, so feast your eyes on Yamaha's new YHT-585BL (\$519.99; www.yamaha.com/yec). This 600-watt surround-sound system brings impressive 5.1-channel audio into your living room. You'll be enveloped in sound from all four quarters as the 8-inch sub-woofer adds resonance and depth. Hear movies come alive . . . all around you.

There are two HDMI inputs and one HDMI output, as well as optical and

coaxial digital inputs for high sound quality. Built in is decoding support for DTS, Dolby Digital, and Dolby Pro Logic II for top sound from DVDs. (Most BD [Blu-ray Disc] and HD DVD players have integrated decoders for high-definition audio formats.) Audiophiles may spend much more, but for 99% of typical home-theater needs, this Yamaha system is all you need.

Players

For a disc player that can do it all, look no further than LG's BH200 Super Blu High-Definition Multi-player (\$1,049.95; us.lge.com). Want to watch HD DVD? Done. Blu-ray Disc? No problem. What about all of your existing DVDs? Absolutely, and with 720p/1080p upconversion, too.

The BH200 can decode Dolby Digital Plus, Dolby TrueHD, and DTS-HD audio formats found on BDs and HD DVDs, so all you need to do is hook it up to a quality surround-sound system. Its HDMI 1.3 output supports deep color, which should become important as more HDTVs and HD video sources take advantage of more true-to-life color palettes. Finally, the BH200 supports BD-Java and HDi (HD interactive) to enable certain BDs' and HD DVDs' interactive features.

Recorders

Everybody loves his TiVo. The Series3 HD DVR (\$799.99 plus monthly service plan fee; www.tivo.com) can record up to 35 hours of HD programming or up to 300 hours of standard shows. Better still, it can capture two incoming programs as you watch a different show you've previously recorded. This THX-certified DVR has an HDMI output, Dolby Digital compatibility, and support for future services through Ethernet and USB ports.

For those times when you'd like to share a show with someone else or keep one

you've recorded instead of delete it, take a gander at Panasonic's DMR-EZ27K DVD recorder (\$249.95; www.panasonic.com). It acts like a VCR, only it uses blank DVDs of any type instead of VHS tapes. As a progressive-scan player, it can upconvert your existing DVDs to 1080p resolution when you use its HDMI output.

Don't forget to buy a Logitech Harmony 890 remote (\$349.99; www.logitech.com) to control it all. And with a Harmony RF Wireless Extender for just \$99.99 more, your remote will control your electronics even without a clear line of sight.

If you've already started to set up your home theater, make sure that any components you add will be compatible with your existing equipment. If you're starting from a clean slate, however, the sky's the limit. Check your local Best Buy and Magnolia stores for even more glimpses of the latest and greatest home-theater gear. **FE**

BY MARTY SEMS

Streaming

The only trouble with a dreamy home theater is the fact that you have to leave it behind at some point. Business trips, vacations, that silly job you go to in order to pay off your home-theater purchases . . . they all get in the way of quality escapism. Prove the doubters wrong when they say you can't take it with you.

Sling Media's Slingbox Pro (\$229.99; www.slingmedia.com) can take your high-def or standard TV programming and "sling" it to your mobile device over the Internet. No matter where you are, as long as you have a good connection, you'll be able to watch your DVR or your cable or satellite channels. The Slingbox Pro can send great-looking video to your cell phone or laptop. ●



Panasonic SC-PT950
\$499.95
www.panasonic.com

True Or False?

Musical Myths Regarding Surround-Sound Systems



People have been buying surround-sound systems for longer than HDTV has existed. And yet, consumers still seem to have as many questions about multichannel audio as they do about which TV to buy. Let's try to separate the signal from the noise.

BY MARTY SEMS

TRUE OR FALSE

5.1-channel surround sound doesn't really surround you.

False. This may be a case of marketing rewriting history. Typical 4.1- and 5.1-channel speaker systems were sold with two front and two rear speakers to surround the listener. When 6.1- and 7.1-channel sets emerged, many users questioned the need for additional rear speakers. In response, some manufacturers said that the 4.1- and 5.1-channel systems' "rear" speakers were actually "side" speakers, so consumers should upgrade to 6.1- or 7.1-channel speakers for "true" surround sound. To judge by 5.1 audio's overwhelming popularity, most owners just laughed at this and continued to enjoy their "side" speakers placed well to the rear.

Most movie DVDs, BDs (Blu-ray Discs), and HD DVDs have at least one 5.1-channel mix, which provides a surround-sound experience that most users can't distinguish from 6.1 or 7.1. In comparison, relatively few discs feature 6.1- or 7.1-channel audio right now, although this may change as the BD and HD DVD formats catch on.

TRUE OR FALSE

A good audio system can expand your stereo and mono content into surround sound.

False. And true. Dolby ProLogic II and matrixing schemes are technologies that take audio intended for one or a few speakers and spread it among all available channels in the sound system. These technologies can make your VHS tapes and stereo or mono DVDs sound more room-filling, but they can't accurately extrapolate rear or side audio cues because none were recorded to begin with.

TRUE OR FALSE

You need a surround-sound receiver that decodes Dolby Digital Plus, Dolby TrueHD, and DTS-HD audio formats.

False. You'll find that most quality BD and HD DVD players decode these next-gen formats internally. However, audiophiles may prefer to buy a receiver that can decode these formats over a suitable HDMI connection. This method results in slightly better audio quality, although you would probably need to have the hearing of a dog or a small child to tell the difference.

TRUE OR FALSE

You don't need an HTB.

True. With a little research and reliable advice, you can choose your components rather than rely on a home theater in a box. This approach lets you select the receiver, speakers, and cables you want without compromising on any of them. Also, many HTBs come with DVD players, which you may not need.

TRUE OR FALSE

You can get surround sound from only one or two speaker units.

This one's tricky. In order to have *true* surround sound, you need at least two front and two rear speakers. Some units, though, use audio processing and sound wave reflections to simulate surround sound from one bank or pair of speakers. With proper setup and room characteristics, it will sound like audio is coming from the rear and sides of the room, even though there are no physical speakers there. Your ears may be able to tell the difference from a true surround-sound setup, but you can easily get used to simulated surround.

TRUE OR FALSE

A movie disc's 5.1-channel audio track will play through two speakers.

True. Your left and right satellite speakers will play most of the movie's audio so you can enjoy the film. On the other hand, some aspects of the soundtrack may not be loud enough or may be left out entirely. Without a center front speaker, the dialogue may be too quiet compared to the music or sound effects. Sans subwoofer, you may not hear the deepest bass. And, of course, without rear speakers, you'll feel like the movie experience is in front of you, not all around you.

Find the kind of speakers suitable for your receiver and within your budget and then buy the ones that sound the best. For instance, you could buy bookshelf or tower speakers with good treble, midrange, and bass performance, or you could buy smaller satellite speakers and a subwoofer. Most speakers connect to the receiver with two-wire speaker cable with bare ends or RCA connectors. A subwoofer may take a special cable.

Obviously, an HTB takes the guesswork out of buying a surround-sound system, and the components will probably look like they belong together. An HTB might also be less expensive than individual parts.

Home Theater Shopping Tips

BY MARTY SEMS

A Rear-Projection HDTV



our big-screen HDTV options don't end with LCD and plasma sets. Nor are digital projectors and expensive screens the final word. Rear-projection HDTVs truly are worth your attention if you're looking for outstanding picture quality on a large scale.

RPTVs (rear-projection TVs) have come a long way from the bulky, poorly focused brutes of earlier decades. Today, they offer cutting-edge color and sharp details even in dark areas of video, plus fluid video motion that looks true to life. Many also offer advanced features such as 120Hz picture refresh rates and 1080p support. Before you buy, ask to check an RPTV's image quality with various types of source video, such as high-definition content, DVDs, and standard-definition TV.

Some rear-projection TVs are free-standing and meant to rest on the floor. Many, however, are made to sit on a stand. If you plan to fit your new rear-projection HDTV into an existing entertainment center, pay heed to how deep it is. Check the dimensions from the front to the back of the TV. One of today's slim rear-projection sets will be two to four times deeper than an LCD or plasma, but it will still be much thinner than a traditional CRT TV.

The true test of any TV is how good its picture quality appears to your eyes. That said, some rear-projection display technologies are more likely to produce consistently stunning images with all types of video under virtually any lighting

conditions. Recent LCoS (liquid crystal on silicon) technologies such as Sony's SXRD (Silicon Xtal Reflective Display) and JVC's D-ILA (Digital Direct Drive Image Light Amplifier) show tremendous promise. DLP (Digital Light Processing) is more common and less expensive, whereas LCD in an RPTV offers competitive image quality and value. CRT rear-projection sets capitalize on the infinite contrast ratio available in mature tube technology, but at the cost of added bulk and weight.

Any HDTV will look its best when viewed straight-on, but how will it look from a side chair or the next room? How about from the floor, where you might be relaxing with your kids or grandkids? Before you buy a rear-projection set or any other type of HDTV, check its image quality from the sides and bottom.

Finally, if you're thinking about buying an RPTV that can upconvert DVDs to make them look good on a high-resolution screen, ask to try it out with a player that doesn't upconvert automatically. Note that most upconverting DVD players can provide slightly better picture quality than a typical HDTV performing this operation.

SHOPPING CHECKLIST

☐ What is the screen resolution?

- ☐ 1,280 x 720 ☐ 1,920 x 1,080

☐ Which rear-projection technology?

- ☐ CRT ☐ LCoS (SXRD, D-ILA)
☐ DLP
☐ LCD

☐ How deep is the set (in inches)?

- ☐ 11 ☐ 20
☐ 15 ☐ 23
☐ 17 ☐ 27

☐ Which HDTV formats does it support?

- ☐ 720p
☐ 1080i
☐ 1080p

☐ What features does it include?

- ☐ 120Hz refresh rates
☐ DVD upconversion
☐ HD tuner

☐ What type of inputs does it have?

- ☐ Component ☐ HDMI
☐ Composite ☐ S-Video
☐ DVI

CUT HERE

Plasma & LCD TVs

What's The Difference?



Flat-panel televisions continue to top electronics shoppers' wish lists. However, plasma and LCD sets are based on two very different technologies, so knowing their advantages and disadvantages will help you make an informed decision about which to bring home. **FC**

BY BRIAN HODGE

Plasma

Pros

- Because plasma TVs are based on phosphorescent-screen technology, their pictures most resemble those of tube TVs in terms of brightness, color depth and shading, and picture clarity.
- Plasma still has the edge over LCDs on contrast ratio (often as high as 10,000:1), black levels, and reproducing subtle color shadings, particularly in dim scenes.
- Pixel response is very rapid, so fast-moving imagery shouldn't blur.
- Plasma sets are generally more affordable in larger screen sizes—say, over 50 inches.
- Although this is a more subjective evaluation, many viewers find that plasma sets do a better job of scaling up lower-resolution standard-definition TV signals.

Cons

- Some plasmas consume more electricity and put out much more heat during use than LCDs.
- At higher altitudes (above 6,500 feet), lower air pressure can cause the set to produce a buzzing noise similar to a neon sign.
- Although it's less likely now than with older sets, plasmas (usually cheaper, low-quality models) can still be susceptible to burn-in from static images such as stock-ticker bars and video-game gauges.
- With sets of equivalent size, plasmas are much heavier than LCDs, which can affect plans for wall mounting, and they can also be harder for one person to move.

Plasma Is Best For:

- Movie buffs
- Sports fanatics
- Viewers shopping for a large set
- Viewers prepared to pay for professional installation

LCD

Pros

- LCDs run cooler and often require less power to operate than plasma TVs.
- LCDs use a screen coating that reflects little ambient light, so glare and washout aren't a problem even under bright lighting conditions.
- There's no chance of image burn-in.
- Many LCD TVs have PC-compatible connections so the set can double as a computer monitor.
- With a few exceptions, LCD is your main choice for sets 40 inches and under. Most new under-40-inch plasmas come from off-brands that may be more of a gamble than sets from the major names.

Cons

- Pixel response may be a tad slower than plasma, so fast-moving imagery might blur.
- New LCDs may have stuck pixels, which show up as bright pinpoints of light. And a hard rap on the screen may break crystals and leave a permanent dark spot.
- True blacks can be difficult to reproduce because the fluorescent backlight still shines through the pixel grid (although some of the newest models are starting to address this by turning off the backlight in select screen areas).
- After a few years of use, the aging backlight may shift color somewhat, forcing the user to recalibrate the set.

LCD Is Best For:

- Avid gamers
- Viewers with brightly lit rooms
- Viewers shopping for a smaller set
- Viewers who want to do their own no-fuss installation
- Computer users

HDTVs

5 Must-Have Accessories



1 Invariably, as you head toward the HDTV section of your local consumer electronics store, you'll walk right past shelves of bland-looking HDTV accessories. Sure, these accessories have multichannel audio, gold-plated connectors, nitrogen-injected insulation, and fully-articulating mounting arms, but they just can't compete visually with their big-screen, flat-panel HDTV counterparts. Despite outward appearances, however, there are a handful of accessories that are vital to getting the most from your HDTV.

1 HDMI cables. We're guessing neither you nor your wife wants bundles of wires and cords snaking around the living room, and those nests of wires are attractive nuisances for your children and pets. HDMI cables are all-in-one cords that carry uncompressed digital audio and digital video signals to and from your HDTV and its components, eliminating the need for separate cords for video and audio. Rocketfish's 4-foot HDMI cable (\$64.99; www.bestbuy.com) is the perfect accessory to pass your digital signals—nicely and neatly—among your devices. Be sure to budget for this must-have.

2 Wall mount. Mounting your new HDTV on a wall will show it to its greatest advantage, and a swivel mount will let you adjust the position of the television so you see it from its best viewing angle. A wall-mounted HDTV also clears a bit of floor space and keeps your living room or home theater neat and clutter-free. Before hanging the wall mount and installing the television, make sure your theater recliners and couches are positioned where you'll be happy with them for a while so you don't have to drill new holes in the walls every time you want to rearrange the furniture.

3 Stand. If you'd rather not drill holes in your family room's newly painted walls or if your walls are made of cement or cinderblock, a stand is probably a better option than a wall mount. Today's A/V furniture manufacturers offer gorgeous, showroom-style stands in a variety of materials, including warm wood (available in many stains), minimalist brushed steel, and clean-looking glass. You can get a triangular corner model, a high-backed cabinet that includes a mount for flat-panel HDTVs, and a rack with adjustable shelves to accommodate the rest of your A/V gear.

4 Surround-sound system. We're willing to bet that you've struggled with keeping volume levels steady when you're watching something on TV. There's nothing more annoying than being startled by a loud commercial in the middle of your favorite show; likewise, nothing is more jolting than when a quiet, serene part of your favorite movie is suddenly interrupted by a too-loud scene change. Eliminate this by investing in a good-quality surround-sound system, which will prevent volume extremes by automatically equalizing the audio in movies and HD broadcasts that are capable of 5.1 or better surround sound.

5 Universal remote. Let's face it: No one—not your mom, dad, grandma, or even the kids—can figure out the remotes when there's a different one for each component in your home-theater system. Consolidate the controls for your various devices with a programmable universal remote, which lets you control everything with a single device. The Logitech Harmony 880 Advanced Universal Remote (\$249.99; www.logitech.com) lets you control 15 devices at once. Better still, you'll keep your living room clean and clutter-free. **FG**

BY ANDREW LEIBMAN

Buying An HDTV

Top 5 Things To Know

Buying an HDTV is a big decision. There are myriad options and plenty of accessory choices on the market. And let's face it—you're spending a whole lot of money. Here we identify the five most important things to consider when shopping for the right HDTV.

1 Buy quality cables. Very few home-theater components, including the most expensive televisions and DVD players, come with high-quality cables. Plan to spend around an extra hundred dollars purchasing cables, such as HDMI, DVI, or component cables, for the highest-resolution formats each device

can support. HDMI, the latest HDTV cable option, will eliminate cord tangles with a single cord that connects your DVD player or digital television receiver to your HDTV. It supports all high-definition resolutions (720p, 1080i, etc.) while maintaining a digital signal throughout the process. Whatever option you select, don't settle for buying the cheapest or shortest cable on the store shelf. Low-quality construction invites electrical interference and unreliable connections, and the cables may not withstand normal wear and tear as well as more expensive ones.

2 Don't hang it yourself. In most cases, it's best to hire a professional to hang your HDTV. A successful wall mount on regular drywall requires the right bracket, a correct wall stud alignment, and a reliable attachment between the TV and its bracket. Brick or cinderblock walls provide an even greater installation challenge. Most electronics retailers offer affordable installation services and usually guarantee their work. So, unless you're willing to bet your big new investment on your carpentry skills, bring in the experts.

3 Make yourself at home. Your living room setup isn't the same as a warehouse filled with walls of shimmering TV sets. In order to get the most realistic impressions of HDTVs at the store, take advantage of retailers' efforts to re-create home environments. Try to preview your prospective purchase in these settings and bring a few of your favorite DVDs to see how they look on different HDTV models before making any final decisions.

4 Size it up. Finding a set that works in your room is a crucial part of your purchase. A small room and a couch near the TV means you should invest in a fairly small HDTV; a larger space with plenty of seating for friends and family requires a bigger screen. To calculate your optimal screen size, use the three-to-five rule. Measure the distance, in feet, from your TV's location to your viewing position. Multiply that number by three, and then by five. Those numbers represent the minimum and maximum screen sizes, measured in inches diagonally, for that space. For example, a 10-foot span from your TV to sofa will accommodate screens between 30 and 50 inches.

5 Fine-tune color. There's more to brilliant, sharp pictures than screen resolution; color reproduction and calibration make a big difference, too. When you're browsing HDTVs at a retailer, be sure the colors are consistently true to life. Blacks shouldn't appear gray, bright areas shouldn't wash detail away, and high-paced action scenes shouldn't have jagged edges. Calibration is another important factor to keep in mind; this will ensure your HDTV's settings will be far better than the showroom settings many televisions ship with. Most retailers offer professional calibration (such as Best Buy's Geek Squad premium installation services) that uses special equipment otherwise unavailable to consumers; in most cases, such calibration is your best bet. However, there are calibration DVDs that can walk you through the process yourself. **FG**

BY GREGORY ANDERSON



Your Home Theater Go-To Guys

Best Buy's Home Theater Installation Services

Back in the day, setting up a TV was a cinch, but it's more complicated now. Best Buy's Geek Squad Home Theater Installation lets you sit back and envision your ultimate viewing and listening environment, while leaving the design, configuration, and installation to the Geek Squad's trained experts.

In-Home Consultation

The Geek Squad offers an in-home consultation service. Schedule an appointment by calling 1-800-GEEK SQUAD (1-800-433-5778) or by visiting your local Best Buy and speaking to a customer specialist.

The Geeks spend roughly an hour helping you build your dream A/V system. The experts perform a preliminary walkthrough of your home, discussing with you the possibilities and offering advice on choosing products that meet your needs. The cost of the service, which includes a detailed estimate of costs and a diagram of the proposed layout, is \$100. If you buy your equipment at Best Buy and spend more than \$499, you can apply the cost of your consultation toward the purchase.

In-store experience. Many Best Buy stores feature a Magnolia demo room, in which you'll see and hear what a high-performance home-theater setup should look and sound like in a comfortable living room-like setting. A Geek Squad expert will ascertain what it is that you want

Available Services

Geek Squad offers a range of flexible and comprehensive services to help you realize your ideal home-theater system.

- Consultation
- Delivery and setup
- TV mounting
- Speaker installation
- Universal remotes
- Extras

from your home-theater system. They'll also make sure you'll have the proper cables and accessories to make it work, as well as ensure you're informed about the product. For instance, if you purchase a new HDTV, the Geek Squad can inform you about the local availability of digital cable, satellite, and over-the-air services.

In-home installation. The Geek Squad's basic TV And Video setup costs \$150 and includes the plugging in, configuring, and setting up of three select video components. Add audio integration for another \$50, bringing the Home Theater Setup to \$200. Other services, such as calibration, remote control programming, and stand assembly, are available, as well.

One-Stop Shop

You already know that you can get the products you want at Best Buy, and now you know that you can get it all

Price Breakdown

Geek Squad offers a fairly complete list of professional installation services that feature a clear pricing scheme so you can make sure you get a system that fits your lifestyle and your budget.

- In-home system design and layout consultation: \$100
- TV And Video setup: \$150
- Home Theater setup: \$200
- Flat-panel TV and projector mounting
 - 20 inches and under: \$300
 - 21 to 32 inches: \$400
 - 33 inches and up: \$500
 - Front projector: \$600
- In-wall speaker installation
 - One speaker: \$100
 - Three speakers: \$200
 - Five speakers: \$300
 - Up to seven speakers: \$400
- Universal remote programming
 - Harmony remote: \$150
 - Other universal remote: \$300

installed and configured to your liking with the help of Best Buy's Geek Squad Home Theater Installation service. Perhaps the most important aspect of the service is that the Geek Squad experts will teach you to become the expert of your own home theater. **FG**

BY ANDREW LEIBMAN

Which Type Of HDTV Is Right For You?




Plasma, LCD, and rear projection: These are the three main types of HDTVs from which you'll choose if you're in the market for a sleek, new set. Refer to our comparison chart below to see how the technologies stack up against each other.



What It Is	What It Means	Plasma	LCD	Rear Projection
Technology	Different types of HDTVs use different technologies; understanding each type can help make your decision easier	Plasma uses a network of cells, each filled with a gas mixture. When the gas is excited, it lights up, and the cells form the image on your HDTV.	Light is streamed through cells filled with a liquid-crystal mixture. When charged, the intensity changes, forming the image on your HDTV.	There are three main types of rear-projection: DLP, LCD, and LCoS. All use a lamp to bounce light off a chip onto the screen.
Size	The screen's diagonal size	Up to around 63 inches	Up to around 52 inches	Up to 65 inches and beyond
Depth	The depth of the set as a whole	4 to 5 inches deep	4 to 5 inches deep	From around 16 to 22 inches deep
Wall mountable	Can be mounted with a special bracket	Yes	Yes	No
Color reproduction	The brightness, saturation, and black level of an HDTV are some of the most important considerations	Excellent brightness, color saturation, and black levels	Exceptional brightness; very good color saturation; black-level quality is improving	Exceptional brightness and color saturation; generally excellent black levels
Ideal room type	Some types of HDTVs fit better in certain rooms than others	Media rooms with various seating areas	Rooms with windows or other ambient light	Larger rooms with a little extra floor space
Cost	HDTV prices range quite a bit depending on the technology	Expensive, though much less so than two years ago	Expensive, but generally less than plasma	Relatively inexpensive
Perfect for		TV fanatic who values picture quality above everything else	Gamers who also love HDTV	Big-screen lovers on a budget
Cooliest feature		Excellent response time for high action	In general, can also be used as a PC monitor	Exceptional value for size

Which LCD TV Is Right For You?

So you've decided to get an LCD TV. The next step is deciding *which* LCD TV to invest in. With all the models on today's market, you want to be sure the model you pick out is the best for you and your family. Refer to this chart for further help when shopping.

				
		8463076	8419641	8564831
		Insignia NS-LCD42HD	HP SL4778N MediaSmart	Samsung LN-T4669F
What It Is	What It Means			
Size	The diagonal measurement of the TV's screen	42 inches	47 inches	46 inches
Dimensions (without stand)	Height x width x depth	28.6x41.4x4.1 inches	29.3x44.4x5.4 inches	26.2x44.6x4.1 inches
Weight (without stand)	How much the TV weighs	56.1 pounds	66 pounds	55.1 pounds
Native resolution	The image's sharpness is best when displayed at the native resolution; anything else must be converted	1080p	1080p	1080p
Viewing angle	The maximum angle at which the viewer can see the screen clearly	178 degrees	176 degrees	178 degrees
Inputs	Inputs let you connect your components to your TV	2 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 2 composite; 1 PC	3 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 2 composite; 1 PC	3 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 1 PC; 2 RF
Outputs	Outputs let information from the TV, usually audio, be transferred to peripherals, such as speakers	1 audio	4 audio	1 audio
Coollest feature		1080p resolution: highest resolution available	Networkable TV supports 802.11a/b/g/n and 10/100-Base T Ethernet	Lets you seamlessly view high-action scenes
MSRP		\$996.99	\$2,499.99	\$2,999.99



8457216

**Samsung
LN-T5281F**



8618944

**Sharp AQUOS
LC-52D43U**



8500721

**Mitsubishi Diamond
LT-46244**



8454978

Dynex DX-LCD37



8460284

**Sony BRAVIA
KDL-46XBR4**

52 inches

52 inches

46 inches

37 inches

46 inches

30.7x54x4.7 inches

32.9x48.7x12.8 inches

26.9x42.3x5.7 inches

25.1x36.6x4.4 inches

29x49.7x4.8 inches

81.1 pounds

62.8 pounds

42.3 pounds

35.6 pounds

66.1 pounds

1080p

1080p

1080p

720p

1080p

178 degrees

176 degrees

N/A

178 degrees

178 degrees

3 HDMI; 2 compo-
nent; 2 S-Video;
2 composite; 1 PC

3 HDMI; 2 compo-
nent; 1 S-Video; 1 PC

4 HDMI; 2 compo-
nent; 2 S-Video; 2
composite

1 HDMI; 1 compo-
nent; 1 S-Video; 1
composite; 1 A/V

3 HDMI; 2 compo-
nent; 1 S-Video; 3
composite; 1 PC

1 audio

4 audio

2 audio

1 audio

2 audio

**LED SmartLighting
technology** controls
the brightness of the
backlight on a frame-
by-frame basis

Side terminals make
it easy to mount this
slim, attractive TV on
the wall

CableCARD slot
lets you descramble
and watch cable TV
without a set-top
box (where available)

Price: Very affordable
for a 37-inch LCD
HDTV

Motionflow
smooths images,
particularly in
sporting events
and movies

\$4,999.99

\$3,099.99

\$3,899.98

\$749.99

\$3,599.99

Which Plasma TV Is Right For You?

If you're planning on buying a plasma HDTV, it might be hard to decide on one just by looking at a wall of gorgeous sets. The most popular size of plasma TV is between 42 and 50 inches (and that's what we focus on below); as with most things in life, though, the bigger the better, so you'll find larger plasmas, as well. Refer to this chart for further help when shopping.



8507387



8454996



8254355

What It Is	What It Means	Hitachi P60X901	Insignia NS-PDP50	LG 50PC5D
Size	The diagonal measurement of the TV's screen	60 inches	50 inches	50 inches
Dimensions (without stand)	Height x width x depth	37.1x59.4x6.2 inches	32x51.4x4.4 inches	32.7x48.8x3.5 inches
Weight (without stand)	How much the TV weighs	162.9 pounds	95 pounds	76.3 pounds
Native resolution	The image's sharpness is best when displayed at the native resolution; anything else must be converted	1080p	720p	720p
Viewing angle	The maximum angle at which the viewer can see the screen clearly	170 degrees	N/A	160 degrees
Inputs	Inputs let you connect your components to your TV	3 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 2 composite	2 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 1 RF; 1 PC	2 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 2 PC
Outputs	Outputs let information from the TV, usually audio, be transferred to peripherals, such as speakers	3 audio	1 audio	1 audio; 1 A/V
Coollest feature		PictureMaster V video processor smooths the picture for movie-like quality	The price —excellent for a 50-inch plasma HDTV	LG SimpLink lets you control other LG SimpLink products using the existing HDMI connection
MSRP		\$6,999.98	\$1,299.99	\$1,599.95



8378677

LG 60PY3D



8501757

**Panasonic
TH-42PZ77U**



8397629

**Pioneer
PRO-950HD**



8580822

**Samsung
FP-T5894W**



8251633

**Samsung
HP-T4254**

60 inches

42 inches

42 inches

58 inches

42 inches

38.2x63.6x4.7
inches

25.3x47.7x4.4
inches

26.75x40.9x4.5
inches

33x57.7x3.9 inches

27.5x41.5x3.7
inches

142.4 pounds

77.2 pounds

84.9 pounds

130.1 pounds

67.5 pounds

1080p

1080p

1,024 x 768 pixels

1080p

720p

160 degrees

170 degrees

170 degrees

175 degrees

175 degrees

3 HDMI; 2 component; 2
S-Video; 2 PC; 1 RF

2 HDMI; 2 component; 3
S-Video

4 HDMI; 2 component;
1 S-Video; 1 PC

3 HDMI; 2 RF; 1 S-Video; 2
component; 2 A/V

3 HDMI; 2 component; 2
S-Video; 1 PC

2 audio

2 audio; 1 video

2 audio; 1 video

1 audio

2 audio

XD Engine delivers
well-contrasted
images and bright,
vibrant colors

EZ Sync remote lets
you control all of your
home-theater compo-
nents

CableCARD slot and
10/100-Base T Ether-
net LAN Home Gallery
to add the TV to your
home network

Wireless media box
lets you connect your
A/V components and
transmit their signals
directly to your TV

Game mode enhances
and sharpens the pic-
ture and speeds up the
image processing
response

\$5,399.95

\$1,799.95




\$3,200

\$4,599.99

\$1,499.99

Which Rear-Projection TV Is Best For You?

If you're in the market for a big HDTV, a rear-projection model can give you a lot of bang for your buck. Here is a chart that compares eight models, all available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com).

		 8320168 Mitsubishi Diamond WD-65733	 8404489 Mitsubishi Diamond WD-73733	 8247916 Samsung HLT5075S
What It Is	What It Means			
Projection technology	Depending on the manufacturer, the TV will use DLP, LCD, or LCoS display technology	DLP	DLP	DLP
Size	The diagonal measurement of the TV's screen	65 inches	73 inches	50 inches
Dimensions (without stand)	Height x width x depth	39.5x58.2x15.7 inches	43.6x65.2x17.5 inches	31.9x45.1x13.25 inches
Weight (without stand)	How much the TV weighs	78 pounds	92.4 pounds	56.7 pounds
Native resolution	The image's sharpness is best when displayed at the native resolution; anything else must be converted	1080p	1080p	720p
Inputs	Inputs let you connect your components to your TV	3 HDMI; 3 component; 2 S-Video; 2 RF	3 HDMI; 3 component; 2 S-Video; 2 composite	2 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 1 PC
Outputs	Outputs let information from the TV, usually audio, be transferred to peripherals, such as speakers	2 audio; 1 video	3 audio	1 audio
Coollest feature		HD-capable antenna to receive OTA HD broadcasts	Front-panel USB port , so you can enjoy your fave digital photos on the big screen	My Color Control lets you carefully tweak your color settings
MSRP		\$2,199.99	\$4,299.98	\$1,199.99



8293839

Samsung HLT5676S



8451677

**Sony BRAVIA
KDS-55A3000**



8451668

**Sony BRAVIA
KDS-60A3000**



8414094

**Sony BRAVIA
KDF-46E3000**



8396041

**Panasonic
PT-61LCZ70**

DLP	LCoS (Sony's name for it is SXRD)	LCoS (Sony's name for it is SXRD)	LCD	LCD
56 inches	55 inches	60 inches	46 inches	61 inches
33.25x50.75x10.5 inches	36.25x49.75x15.75 inches	38.75x55.5x20 inches	31.3x43.27x11.85 inches	39.3x56.25x21.3 inches
65.3 pounds	81.6 pounds	94.8 pounds	55.1 pounds	74.9 pounds
1080p	1080p	1080p	1080p	720p
3 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 2 RF; 1 PC; 2 composite	3 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 3 composite; 1 PC	2 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 3 composite; 1 PC	2 HDMI; 3 component; 1 S-Video; 3 composite; 2 RF	3 HDMI; 2 component; 3 composite; 1 S-Video; 2 A/V; 1 RF
2 A/V; 1 video	1 audio	2 audio	1 audio	2 audio
SRS TruSurround XT technology for an excellent audio experience	BRAVIA Theater Sync 2 lets you control your TV and other A/V components with one easy remote	Advanced Iris Function increases the contrast in dark scenes, making them easy to see	Sleep timer, parental lock, and picture freeze give viewers a great deal of control	LiFi Technology provides a light source that speeds startup times for instant response
\$2,099.99	\$2,499.99	\$2,699.99	\$1,599.99	\$1,995.95

HDTV Glossary

B alderdash! OK, HDTV jargon isn't *that* bad, but there are a few terms every shopper should know. Here's your cheat sheet.

aspect ratio—Put simply, it's the shape of the TV's screen. An HDTV has a wider picture than a traditional TV of the same vertical screen height. An HDTV has a 16:9 aspect ratio, meaning that if its screen were 16 inches wide, it would be 9 inches tall. A regular 4:3 TV screen would be 12 inches wide at the same 9-inch height.

HDMI—High-Definition Multimedia Interface is a new type of cable connection. It can carry both high-resolution video and uncompressed, multichannel audio among HDTVs, home-theater receivers, and other components. HDMI cables are pricey, but they maintain top picture and sound quality.

HD tuner—Some more expensive HDTVs include a built-in tuner for receiving local high-def broadcast TV channels. Your TV doesn't need an HD tuner if you have cable or satellite service. Separate HD tuners and antennas are available for HDTVs without them.

interlaced—When an HDTV displays an interlaced image, as in 1080i or 480i resolutions, it really shows you every other horizontal line of a frame of video (called a field) at a time. Sixty times a second, the TV displays the other field of the frame, meaning the lines not shown in the previous field. Interlaced video appears to flicker and causes moving objects on-screen to have blurred edges.

LCD—Like a notebook's screen, a liquid-crystal display HDTV uses a fluid crystal



substance to form pixels of color in front of a backlight. LCDs may not be able to match plasma TVs' deep black and gray areas, but they're lighter, sometimes less fragile, and considered easier to set up. LCDs also are catching up to plasmas in size and price and are expected to supplant them in the market.

plasma—Plasma TVs use a tiny tube of gas for each pixel. Electricity makes each pixel glow. Plasmas are still available in bigger sizes than LCDs and create deeper blacks and sometimes brighter colors. However, older or less expensive models can also suffer permanent screen damage if an unchanging image is displayed too long, such as a TV channel's stock ticker or parts of certain video games.

progressive scan—A TV showing a progressively scanned image, as in 1080p or 720p resolutions, displays a full frame of video (both odd-lined and even-lined fields) all at once. Progressive-scan

video looks sharper and doesn't flicker like interlaced images can.

projection—Some large-screen HDTVs offer low-priced alternatives to LCD or plasma by using projection technologies. These technologies vary, but all projection TVs throw light on a screen from the front or rear. This means they are a little to a lot bulkier than plasmas or LCDs, but some rear-projection sets have stellar picture quality.

viewing angle—No matter where you sit in front of an HDTV with a wide viewing angle, such as 170 degrees, its picture should look reasonably good. Test this before you buy.

widescreen—A TV or monitor that's wider horizontally in relation to its vertical height—typically with a 16:9 aspect ratio for HDTVs—than an older 4:3 display.

Accents & Accessories

Useful Add-Ons For Your Digital Camera

Accents and accessories can make a good thing even better. Jewelry adds flare to an outfit; family pictures, throw pillows, and grandma's afghan give your living space that homey feeling; and digital-camera accents and accessories can help you enjoy your photos and protect your equipment. There

are countless add-ons for your digital camera, including digital photo frames, tripods, cases, and accessory kits. Here, we'll look at eight digital imaging accents and accessories that you can find at your local Best Buy. **PG**

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON



iMate Momento 100

\$299.99 • offer.momentolive.com

A good way to show off your photos is to frame them and put them on your desk. With a digital photo frame, you can show off *all* of your pictures, instead of one or two that would fit in a standard frame. The iMate Momento 100 has a large, 10.2-inch display, a remote, and wireless connectivity so you can connect it to your home network and stream photos from your computer. To see pictures immediately after taking them, insert the memory card from your camera into the frame's reader, which supports formats such as SD, MMC, xD, SmartMedia, and Memory Stick.

Perfect For: Proud parents who want to show off photos but don't want to swap out prints and frames.



Olympus FE/Stylus Digital Accessory Kit

\$49.99 • www.olympus.com

Accessory kits provide the basic things you'll need for your camera. The Olympus FE/Stylus Digital Accessory Kit, for example, comes with a soft leather case, an extra rechargeable battery, and a metal neck strap to keep your camera handy. This kit protects your camera, keeps it readily accessible, and provides shooting power when you need it most. Beyond getting what you need, accessory kits can also save you money; Olympus says you'll save \$25 buying this kit as opposed to purchasing the items separately.

Perfect For: On-the-go moms who can use extra protection and shooting power.

Case Logic EVA Compact Camera Case

\$12.99 • www.caselogic.com

The lightweight EVA Compact Camera Case from Case Logic holds many models of compact digital cameras. It also has an internal mesh pocket to store accessories such as an extra memory card. This durable, semirigid case offers more protection for your camera than traditional soft cases, and it looks great, too. Whether you use the detachable wrist strap to hold the camera or toss the case and camera inside your purse, your camera will always be within reach when you need it.

Perfect For: Anyone looking for a case with style and durability.



Kingston 4GB SDHC Class 4 Flash Card

\$53 • www.kingston.com

Kingston's latest 4GB SDHC (Secure Digital High-Capacity) card delivers a large storage capacity with high access speeds. This card may look like your average SD card, but because it supports Class 4 SDHC speed ratings, your camera can write to it more quickly than with standard SD cards, giving you greater shooting speed. Plus, name-brand memory cards are more reliable than their generic counterparts. Kingston even offers a lifetime warranty with this card.

Perfect For: Photo enthusiasts who require lots of capacity and speed.



Dynex 60" Universal Tripod With Pan Head

\$39.99 • www.bestbuy.com

Tripods are a great accessory for any digital camera. They keep the camera steady in low-light situations to help you avoid taking fuzzy pictures and let you include yourself in a family or group shot. The three-way pan head on the Dynex 60" Universal Tripod With Pan Head is perfect for trying some new photographic techniques such as panning. For convenience, this tripod also has a quick release plate to help you mount and remove the camera with ease. Finally, the heavy-duty rubber feet and retractable spike tips help ensure the tripod won't slip mid shot.

Perfect For: The family photographer who is tired of being behind the camera.





Canon Speedlite 580EX II

\$499.99 • www.usa.canon.com

Although D-SLRs have flash built-in, your shots may look better with an external flash. It provides more light to reach far-away subjects and helps you avoid shadows. The Canon Speedlite 580EX II works with most Canon D-SLRs and some PowerShots to provide extra light when you need to bounce light to eliminate shadows. This flash has a low recycle time, so you won't miss shots. The Speedlite 580EX II reaches up to 98.4 feet—much farther than built-in flashes. This high-end flash also resists dust and water better than previous models.

Perfect For: Users who frequently shoot in low-light situations and indoors.



Adobe Photoshop Elements 6 & Premiere Elements 4

\$149.99 • www.adobe.com

Our photos and video don't always turn out as we had hoped. Thankfully, we can improve a bad shot or video with the help of software such as Adobe Photoshop Elements 6 & Premiere Elements 4. This bundle gives you powerful yet easy-to-use features to help you edit and share content. Photoshop Elements 6 lets you fix closed eyes or frowns by combining photos to form the best shot. Premiere Elements 4 makes it easy to create movies using your favorite photos and video to share.

Perfect For: Any photographer who wants to edit and share her photos.



Sunpak Platinum Plus 52mm Ultraviolet Lens Filter

\$9.99 • www.tocad.com

Think of a UV filter as a cheap insurance policy for your D-SLR. UV filters protect your lens from scratches and fingerprints. Considering lenses often cost \$100 or more, a filter is relatively inexpensive by comparison. In addition, the Sunpak Platinum Plus 52mm Ultraviolet Lens Filter can help improve contrast and color saturation in your photos by reducing the effects of ultraviolet light. This particular filter is compatible with any 52mm lens, such as the kit lens that accompanies the Nikon D40x D-SLR (\$799.95; www.nikonusa.com).

Perfect For: D-SLR owners who want extra protection for their cameras.



Your Best Shot

We Compare Three Popular D-SLRs



D-SLR (digital single-lens reflex) cameras give you full control over the pictures you take, letting you tweak settings such as aperture and shutter speed to get an ideal shot. These cameras also eliminate annoying shutter lag typically found on point-and-shoot digital cameras. In the past, high prices had deterred many users from buying

D-SLRs. However, that's no longer the case, as prices have dropped significantly in recent years. If you've wanted a D-SLR for a while, now may be the perfect time to buy. Even though D-SLRs are more affordable than ever, that doesn't mean deciding which model to buy is easy. Quite the opposite, because there are so many good options available. Let's look at three of today's popular (and affordable) D-SLRs.

Olympus Evolt E-510

\$799 body only; \$899 with one kit lens;
\$999 with two kit lenses • www.olympusamerica.com

Basic specs. Olympus offers one- and two-lens kits for the 10MP Evolt E-510. With the two-lens kit, you'll get a Zuiko Digital ED 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 lens and a Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm f/4-5.6 lens. If you buy both lenses, you'll have greater zooming capabilities than you would with a single kit lens from other manufacturers; the 14-42mm lens will let you zoom out for wide-angle shots, and the 40-150mm lens gives you a standard to telephoto view. The lightest camera in the bunch, this camera's body weighs about 16.2 ounces and measures 3.61 x 5.35 x 2.2 (HxWxD) inches. The Evolt E-510 has three autofocus points.

Features. The Olympus Evolt E-510 is the only camera in this roundup that sports a live preview feature. This feature lets you use the 2.5-inch LCD on the back of the camera to frame a shot as you might with a point-and-shoot digital camera. As with point-and-shoot digital cameras, using the Evolt E-510's LCD to frame a shot will drain your battery more quickly than using the viewfinder. The Evolt E-510 also has a Mechanical Image Stabilization feature that compensates for camera movement and eliminates blur from your images. Other D-SLR manufacturers offer image stabilization as a feature in some lenses.

To help ensure your pictures are dust-free, the Evolt E-510 has a Dust Reduction System. In addition to traditional manual controls, the Evolt E-510 has 28 automatic shooting modes to provide instant settings for many situations. Like other models, the Evolt E-510 can shoot up to 3fps.



Canon EOS Digital Rebel XTi

\$799 body only; \$899 with kit lens • www.usa.canon.com

Basic specs. The body of the Canon Rebel XTi measures 3.71 x 4.98 x 2.56 inches and weighs 18 ounces. The standard kit lens that accompanies this 10.1MP D-SLR is the Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 zoom lens. On the back of this camera, you'll find a 2.5-inch LCD that has a viewing angle of 160 degrees and six brightness settings. While framing a picture, you can select from nine autofocus points.

Features. One of the unique features of the Rebel XTi is its EOS Integrated Cleaning System, which consists of a self-cleaning image sensor and dust removal function that can map and delete dust particles using software. To help save battery life and avoid distracting the user, the Rebel XTi's Display Off Sensor will turn off the LCD when a user raises the camera to her eye.

Action photographers will appreciate the Rebel XTi's ability to capture 27 images in a burst of about 3fps. For users who want to select presets for sharpening, contrast, saturation, and color tone, Canon included Picture Style in the Rebel XTi. Similar to the way in which film photographers select a film type to achieve a desired result, Picture Style offers six predefined setting choices (Standard, Portrait, Landscape, Neutral, Faithful, and Monochrome) along with three user-defined settings.



Nikon D40x

\$629.95 body only; \$699.95 with kit lens • www.nikonusa.com

Basic specs. Nikon's D40x is a 10.2MP upgrade to the original D40. This camera measures approximately 3.7 x 5 x 2.5 inches and weighs about 17 ounces (body only). The kit lens for the D40x, an 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G ED II AF-S DX Zoom-Nikkor lens, is similar to the Canon Rebel XTi kit lens in focal length and aperture range. The D40x has a 2.5-inch color LCD with a 170-degree viewing angle. To frame a picture with the D40x, you can choose among three autofocus points.

Features. The D40x powers up and is ready for shooting in approximately 0.18 seconds. This camera can shoot up to 100 images at 3fps in burst mode. Less-skilled users will appreciate the D40x's eight automated, scene-optimized Digital Vari-Program modes. If you prefer to print your pictures directly from the camera's memory card, you may also like the D40x's Retouch menu that lets you edit pictures in-camera. From the Retouch menu, you can brighten dark pictures, correct red-eye, crop an image, apply filter effects, and more.



Which One?

All three D-SLRs we consider in this article are good cameras. Because there are countless factors that one must consider when looking for a D-SLR, we

can't recommend a single model for all users. Keep in mind that you're not only choosing a camera, you're also choosing a photographic system that you'll use for many years. Your choice of a camera will dictate future photo

accessories, such as lenses, flashes, memory cards, etc., which are camera- and brand-specific. **FG**

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON

Camera Conundrums

Answers To Your Digital Camera Questions

There are several common questions people have about digital cameras before they buy one. If you are looking for answers to any of the questions below, you're not alone.

Q I'm shopping for a new digital camera and want one that can zoom in really close to subjects. What specifications and features should I look for on a camera?

A There are two types of zoom: optical and digital. Optical zoom is a true zoom, and it's what you used to get when you twisted the barrel of a film camera's zoom lens. Digital zoom is not a true zoom. Instead, it's similar to what happens when you open a photo in image-editing software, select a small portion of the image, crop it, and then enlarge the small cropped portion. This creates the illusion of being closer to the subject, but you lose image quality in the process. For this reason, when you shop for a digital camera, if the ability to zoom in close is important to you, the only specification that really matters is optical zoom.

Q In the past when I took pictures, they were often blurry. Are there any specifications I should look for when buying a new digital camera so I don't have the same problem in the future?

A Blurry photos are typically the result of the subject or the camera

moving while the shutter is open. Look for a camera that lets you set the shutter speed using either a manual mode or a shutter-priority mode. You should also check a camera's specifications to ensure that it has a fast maximum shutter speed. D-SLRs typically have very fast shutter speeds. For example, the Nikon D40x (\$949; www.nikon-usa.com) has a maximum shutter speed of 1/4,000 second.

However, even non-D-SLRs are available with fast shutter speeds. Canon's PowerShot S5 IS (\$499; www.usa.canon.com) has a fast shutter speed of up to 1/3,200 second. You'll find a whole range of shutter speeds. Lower cost point-and-shoot models usually have slower maximum shutter speeds. The Canon PowerShot A560 (\$249) is much more affordable than the high-end S5 IS, but it only has a maximum shutter speed of 1/2,000 second.

The reason shutter speed is important is that with slow shutter speeds, your camera takes more time to capture image data than when you use a fast shutter speed. If there is any movement by the camera or subject while the shutter is open, the image you capture will be blurry.

Images also blur when you're unable to hold the camera completely still while the shutter is open. You have two options to reduce camera movement. First, you can buy a tripod that holds your



Canon PowerShot S5 IS
\$499
www.usa.canon.com

camera steady so it doesn't shake while the sensor is capturing the photo. Second, you can buy a camera that has integrated IS (image-stabilization) technology, such as Canon's PowerShot SX100 IS (\$299.99). IS technology uses integrated components to detect movement and positions the image-capturing sensor in the opposite direction to offset the movement. If reducing the number of blurry images you take is important, look for a camera with IS technology. Many (but not all) models with IS technology include IS in the name of the camera. You should also see "IS technology" or "image stabilization" in the camera's specs.



Q How many megapixels do I really need?

A Megapixels measure resolution, or how much detail your camera can capture. Each megapixel consists of 1 million **pixels** (the tiny colored dots that combine to make up a complete photo).

To decide how many megapixels you need, consider what size photos you'd like to print. No more than 5MP are necessary to print 8x10 images. With a 6MP camera, you can print quality 11x14 photos. An 8MP camera is capable of producing poster-sized prints. These are only guidelines, however, because your

printer also plays a role in how well your photos turn out. Printers with a higher resolution (expressed in dpi, or dots per inch) will generally produce higher-quality prints than printers with a lower resolution.

Q Is it better to buy a camera that uses AA batteries or one with a proprietary battery pack?

A Battery type is mostly a matter of personal preference. There are strong proponents for both AA and proprietary Li-Ion batteries. In general, Li-Ion batteries last longer between charges than AA batteries. If you need

long battery life for lengthy outdoor shoots, a camera that uses Li-Ion might be the way to go.

However, there are drawbacks to Li-Ion. For example, although all batteries lose some charge when not in use, Li-Ion batteries tend to lose charge more rapidly when left idle. If you haven't used your camera in a while, you may be surprised to find that there isn't as much charge left in your batteries as you expected. Also, Li-Ion battery packs are proprietary, so you'll need to buy a battery that's made specifically for your camera, which makes it harder to buy a spare in a pinch. Visit your local Best Buy and pick up a spare so you're prepared when you head to remote locations for a photo safari.

In contrast, if your camera uses AA batteries, you won't have any trouble finding them. Another option to consider is AA NiMH (nickel-metal hydride) rechargeable batteries, which provide longer battery life than standard alkaline AA batteries. You'll also find NiMH batteries at Best Buy.

Q What does ISO mean?

A A digital camera's ISO (International Organization for Standards) setting measures how sensitive the camera's sensor is to light. When you use a higher ISO setting, your camera can take better photos in low-light conditions than when you use a lower ISO setting. For maximum flexibility, look for a camera that has a wide ISO range. However, be aware that the higher you set the ISO, the more **noise** (small colored specks or artifacts) you'll introduce to your photos. If a camera has ISO settings higher than ISO 400, check the specs for NR (noise-reduction) technology, which will help you use the higher ISO settings without taking photos that have too much noise. **FC**

BY KYLEE DICKEY

Spanning The Spectrum

Focal Lengths Explained

If you've shopped for a D-SLR camera, you've probably noticed that many are available in a kit that includes a camera body and lens. Kit lenses typically have a focal length range of 18 to 55mm. Focal length describes a lens' zoom capabilities. There are many other lenses available, each of which has a different purpose. For example, telephoto lenses let you zoom in to get a closer look, whereas wide-angle lenses let you see more of your surroundings. By understanding the difference in focal lengths among lenses, you'll have a better knowledge of which type of lens best suits your needs. If you're in the market for your first D-SLR, you may find that using a lens other than the kit lens will best suit your needs. As a result, you may decide to forgo the kit lens and save money by buying just the camera body and then put the money you saved toward a specialized lens.

Basic Lens Types

Typically, lenses are grouped into categories based on their focal length. A wide-

angle lens gives you a broad field of view. Wide-angle lenses usually have a focal length of 30mm or lower. Standard lenses have focal lengths ranging from about 30 to 50mm. This type of lens most closely matches the perspective of the human eye. Telephoto lenses magnify objects and typically have focal lengths above 50mm. Lenses with a focal length greater than 200mm are called super-telephotos. Close-up or macro lenses let you focus on something that is a short distance (as little as a few inches) from the camera. Macro lenses can range in focal length.

Choose Your Zoom

In general, the kit lens that accompanies a D-SLR is a good starter lens. As your photographic needs grow, it's worth considering specialized lenses. Because focal length determines your range of view, it will play a big part in helping you decide which type of lens will best suit your photographic needs. **FE**

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON

Shooting Range

A standard lens, such as the Canon EF 28-105mm f/3.5-4.5 II USM (\$299.99; www.usa.canon.com), is perfect if you want a range of wide-angle to slightly telephoto views.

With a macro lens, such as the Nikon AF

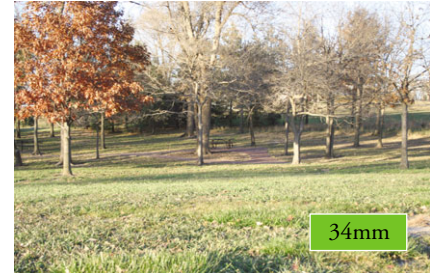
Micro-NIKKOR 60mm f/2.8D (\$549.99; www.nikonusa.com), you can take close-up shots of small objects, such as flower petals.

If you're into nature photography, you may want a telephoto zoom lens, such as the

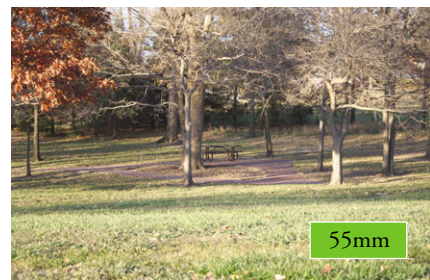
Olympus Zuiko Digital ED 70-300mm f/4-5.6 (\$399.99; www.olympusamerica.com). With this lens, you'll be able to capture your son's facial expression as he shoots a goal, even if you're on the other end of the soccer field. ●



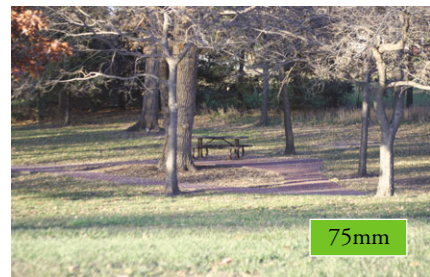
18mm



34mm



55mm



75mm



135mm



300mm

Here's a look at the same picture, using different focal lengths. Notice how the picnic table is hardly noticeable in the first shot but becomes very obvious when you zoom in.

Digital Imaging Shopping Tips

A D-SLR Lens

BY NATHAN LAKE

Your D-SLR camera's starter lens can only handle a limited range of telephoto and wide-angle shots, which can restrict your ability to capture distant or expansive images. Fortunately, there are lenses you can purchase for the particular type of shots you want to take. To help you find an extra lens to match your needs, cut this page out and bring it with you as you shop.

There are a few types of SLR lenses, including standard, telephoto, wide angle, and macro, so you'll need to decide which one will satisfy your needs. Lens classifications are typically based on focal length, such as 50mm. For more information on focal lengths, see "Spanning The Spectrum" on page 42. A standard lens can produce images that come close to matching a human eye perspective, which is helpful when shooting subjects you want to appear natural, such as a person. A telephoto zoom lens provides the long-range zoom you need to photograph faraway subjects. A wide-angle lens lets you capture a more panoramic view, making it perfect for shooting landscapes or in confined spaces. Macro lenses allow you to get extremely close to tiny objects, such as flowers or insects.

D-SLRs electronically relay information to the lens, such as auto-focus and aperture controls, so make sure the lens you purchase has an electronic connection that works with your D-SLR camera. This compatibility information can usually be found in your camera's users manual. The manufacturer of your D-SLR camera will offer several compatible lenses; for instance, Canon's EF

70-300mm f/4-5.6 IS USM Telephoto Zoom Lens (\$699.99; www.usa.canon.com) is compatible with Canon EOS digital SLR cameras.

If you regularly shoot in low-light conditions, you'll want a lens with a good maximum aperture. The lens aperture determines how much light can enter the camera—the wider the aperture, the more light the lens will allow. A lens' aperture is measured in f-stops, such as f/2.8 or f/4.5, and the lower the f-stop number, the wider the aperture will open, thus letting more light flood in. The maximum aperture represents the widest possible f-stop for the lens, so it'd be a smart move to purchase a lens with a low maximum aperture, such as f/2.8 or f/3.5, for shooting in low-light conditions.

Most D-SLRs don't provide built-in image stabilization to counter camera shake, which can result in blurry images. Therefore, if you shoot at slow shutter speeds or at live action events, consider a lens that offers image stabilization. This technology is especially important on a telephoto zoom lens, which captures a compressed perspective that magnifies any camera shake or movement.

SHOPPING CHECKLIST

☐ What type of lens do you need?

- ☐ Macro
- ☐ Standard
- ☐ Telephoto
- ☐ Wide-angle

☐ Is your D-SLR electronically compatible with the lens?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

☐ What is the maximum aperture of the lens?

- ☐ Lower than f/3.5
- ☐ Between f/3.5 to f/5.0
- ☐ Above f/5.0

☐ Do you want a lens with image stabilization?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

☐ Notes

Digital Cameras

5 Must-Have Accessories

Digital cameras capture the memories of events large and small in our lives, and the list of possible accessories is nearly endless. Here are five, though, that we find indispensable. **FC**

BY KATHRYN DOLAN

1 Memory Cards

A memory card full of pictures is a wonderful thing, unless it's too full to accept additional pictures—especially pictures of your daughters and her friends as they create snow angels. Different digital cameras have different memory card slots, so make sure you know what kind of card your camera takes. If you don't know, visit the Memory Cards & Sticks page on Best Buy's Web site and click the Memory Card Finder link. From there, you'll be prompted to select from drop-down lists your Device, the Manufacturer, and the Model, and a page of specs will pop up telling you not only what kind of media your camera takes, but also detailing the manufacturers and cards (and capacities) available for your camera.



2 Camera Case

You'll find bags and cases in all sizes and with all levels of protection. If you've finally splurged and upgraded to the D-SLR you've had your eye on, you'll want a roomy case with plenty of padding so it protects your extra lenses. Make sure the bag has pockets that close with clasps, too, so you can tuck in a spare memory card or two. Plan ahead for your winter ski trip with a padded, water-resistant backpack, such as the Canon Deluxe Backpack 200EG (\$75; usa.canon.com), so you safely carry your camera without compromising your balance. And if your winter break instead includes a snorkeling trip to the warm waters of the Caribbean, you'll need waterproof housing for the camera. Know that waterproof cases are typically designed for specific cameras; one size does not fit all. Check the case's specs to make sure it fits your camera before buying it.



3 External Storage



Memory cards are perfect for short-term storage, but because external storage devices are inexpensive and durable, it's a good idea to periodically offload the pictures from your memory card. If you'd rather not clutter your PC's hard drive and you'd like a dedicated storage device for pictures, consider an external hard drive, such as the 160GB LaCie Rugged All-Terrain Hard Disk (\$219.99; www.lacie.com). This lightweight USB 2.0 device is portable and supports FireWire 800 and 400 and mini USB 2.0 interfaces.

4 Photo Printer

The beauty of a digital camera and photo printer combo is that you end up printing only those pictures you really want to keep. You don't have to print those spooky-looking photos of your red-eyed dog or the accidental pictures of your finger. With PictBridge-compatible printers, you won't have to offload your pictures onto your computer before printing them, either, unless you'd like to edit them first.



5 Power Supply

Whether your camera takes AA batteries or rechargeables, make sure you have an adequate supply so you don't miss photo opportunities as a result of dead batteries. If you have rechargeable batteries, make sure your camera case (or carry-on) has room for your charger, too. When you are traveling overseas, check the power supply where you are visiting, making sure you have the necessary adapters for your charger so you don't accidentally



fry it. Tuck in an extra set of AA batteries for your point-and-shoot digital camera, although you'd be hard pressed to find a destination too remote for a store that stocks AA batteries.

Digital Cameras

Top 5 Things To Know

Digital camera prices have dropped dramatically in the last few years, but that doesn't mean buying your first—or even second—digital camera is an insignificant investment. Here are some important things to keep in mind as you shop; they'll help you make informed decisions when choosing a digicam.

1 Optical Zoom Range

What is the optical zoom range of the lens? You'll only want to pay attention to optical zoom range; don't count the digital zoom, which does nothing more than crop the image to make it appear "closer" and may degrade image quality. A zoom goes from wide angle, which is good for landscapes, to telephoto, which is good for photographing distant subjects. Although most point-and-shoot cameras offer limited options in wide angle, there are many choices for telephoto. Choose a zoom that best fits your needs.

2 LCD Size

What is the size and resolution of the LCD? Although a 2-inch LCD is perfectly usable, most digital cameras are equipped with 2.5-inch or even 3-inch LCDs, which generally make it easier to compose a shot, read camera menus, and review images. On the downside, larger LCDs will drain batteries faster than smaller ones. Also, check the LCD

resolution in pixels; 115,000 is usable, but 235,000 will be sharper.

3 Print Sizes

How many megapixels does the camera have, or, more importantly, what is the largest size print that can be made from that camera? More megapixels doesn't necessarily mean you'll get better pictures, but a camera's megapixel count does affect how large you can print an image. If you don't plan on making large prints, then getting a camera with extra megapixels will be a waste of money and storage space (more megapixels mean larger file sizes, which will quickly fill up your memory card). To determine how many megapixels you need, figure out how large you want to print your images. The rule of thumb is to multiply the dimensions (in inches) of the print you'd like to make by either 200ppi (pixels per inch) or 300ppi. The ppi indicates the print resolution of the image, and either 200ppi or 300ppi will produce good results. To make an 8x10 print at 200ppi, you'll need a file that measures 1,600 x 2,000 pixels or a 3.2MP camera ($1,600 \times 2,000 = 3,200,000$). Using the same math, the ideal camera resolution for an 8x10 print at 300ppi is 7.2MP.

4 Battery Requirements

There are two things to keep in mind when it comes to batteries: battery type and battery life. Many digicams use proprietary, rechargeable Li-Ion batteries and

come with a charger, whereas other cameras include one-time use AA batteries. While AA batteries are ubiquitous, alkaline and other nonrechargeable batteries will eventually need to be discarded and replaced. A more economical, environmentally sound solution is to use NiMH rechargeable AA batteries and a charger. Your camera's battery life is generally rated according to CIPA (Camera & Imaging Products Association) standards, which will give you the average amount of photos you can shoot on one battery charge. CIPA ratings can be found on manufacturers' Web sites, and the higher the CIPA rating a camera has, the better.


5 Media Card

What type of memory card does the camera use? Most digital cameras—including sub-\$1,000 digital SLRs—use SD cards, which come in different capacities and speeds. The number of images you can fit on a card depends on the camera's megapixel count and the resolution or quality level you select when shooting. Determine the maximum number of images you want to put on the card; that will help decide what capacity card you need. Also, find out if the card is SDHC (Secure Digital High Capacity)-compatible and will work with high-capacity (4GB) SD cards. Only cameras with an SDHC designation (available on most manufacturers' Web sites) are capable of using a card with more than a 2GB capacity. **fg**

BY THEANO NIKITAS

Which Camera Is Best For You?

If you're a little confused about the most important features in a digital camera, you're not alone. In this chart, we compare features from select digital cameras available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com), and we also explain what these features mean. If that still has you cross-eyed, we recommend models for certain lifestyles.

				
		8469212	8266164	8463959
		Canon PowerShot SD870 IS	Canon PowerShot SD1000	Kodak EasyShare V1253
What It Is	What It Means			
Resolution	In general, more pixels mean bigger, clearer prints	8MP	7.1MP	12.1MP
Optical zoom	Moves the lens physically closer to your subject	3.8X	3X	3X
Memory card	Removable card that stores your photos in your camera	SD/SDHC/MMC	SD/SDHC	MMC/SD
LCD size	The LCD is the display on the back of the camera	3 inches	2.5 inches	3.1 inches
Battery life	Based on how many shots you can take on a single charge	170 shots	150 shots	N/A
ISO	Light sensitivity; the higher the ISO, the greater the ability to take photos in low-light situations	Auto; Manual: 80, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600	Auto; Manual: 80, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600	Auto; Manual: 64, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600
Print sizes up to (at 240ppi)		10x13 inches	9x12 inches	12x17 inches
Perfect for		Style-conscious photographers who want a top-of-the-line compact camera	First-time digital camera users who are looking for a good starter shooter	Those who want to make large prints, whether it be a single shot or a panorama stitched together
MSRP		\$399.99	\$199.99	\$279.95



8245516

**Olympus Stylus
770 SW**



8460453

**Olympus Stylus
790 SW**



8233681

**Sony Cyber-shot
DSC-W55**



8335606

**Sony Cyber-shot
DSC-W90/B**



8233663

**Sony Cyber-shot
DSC-W200**

7.1MP

7.1MP

7.2MP

8.1MP

12.1MP

3X

3X

3X

3X

3X

xD Picture Card

xD Picture Card

Memory Stick
Duo/PRO DuoMemory Stick
Duo/PRO DuoMemory Stick
Duo/PRO Duo

2.5 inches

2.5 inches

2.5 inches

2.5 inches

2.5 inches

220 images

325 images

380 images

325 images

270 images

Auto; Manual: 80,
100, 200, 400, 800,
1600Auto; Manual: 80,
100, 200, 400, 800,
1600Auto; Manual: 100,
200, 400, 800, 1000Auto; Manual: 100,
200, 400, 800, 1600,
3200Auto; Manual: 100,
200, 400, 800, 1600,
3200

9.6x12.8 inches

9x12 inches

9x12 inches

9x12 inches

12.5x16 inches

Users who need a
rugged camera that
will withstand water,
drops, and cold tem-
peratures.

Camera users who
like taking photos
outdoors, espe-
cially when active

For someone who's
on a budget and
wants a camera that
offers plenty of
shooting modes

Users looking for a
reasonably priced
middle-of-the-road
camera

Hi-def lovers who
want to see their
photos with great
detail and clarity

\$349.99

\$299.95

\$179.99

\$249.99

\$349.99

Which D-SLR Is Best For You?

As D-SLR prices keep coming down, more photographers are turning to them, both as a first camera and as a trade-up to something better. In this chart, we'll help you sort through some of the features and performance specs from select cameras available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com).



7989901

**Canon
Digital Rebel XTi**



8472244

Canon EOS 40D



8139169

Nikon D40

What It Is	What It Means	Canon Digital Rebel XTi	Canon EOS 40D	Nikon D40
Resolution	Image sensor in megapixels; more means a bigger image	10.1MP	10.1MP	6.1MP
LCD size	Diagonal measure of display on back of camera	2.5 inches	3 inches	2.5 inches
ISO range	Light sensitivity	100 to 1600	100 to 3200	200 to 1600
Kit lens	Standard lens bundled with the camera body	EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-22 lens	EF 28-135mm f/3.5-5.6 IS	AF-S DX 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 ED II
Burst speed	Shots per second (fps) while in burst mode	3fps up to 27 shots	6.5fps up to 75 shots	2.5fps to card capacity
Shutter speed	The wider the range, the greater the gamut of long exposures to frozen action	30 to 1/4,000 seconds	30 to 1/8,000 seconds	30 to 1/4,000 seconds
Maximum print size (at 240ppi, without enlargement)		10x16 inches	11x16 inches	8.5x12.5 inches
Perfect for		Shooters looking for a versatile camera that can snap casual and artistic photos	Enthusiastic users who shoot fast action or in low-light situations where image stabilization is handy	First-time camera buyers who are ready to start with a D-SLR
MSRP		\$899.99	\$1,499.99	\$549.95



7976041

Nikon D80

N/A

Nikon D300

8359046

**Olympus EVOLT
E-510**

8178848

Pentax K10D

8547021

**Sony Alpha
DSLR-A700**

10.2MP

12.6MP

10MP

10.2MP

12.2MP

2.5 inches

3 inches

2.5 inches

2.5 inches

3 inches

100 to 1600

200 to 3200

100 to 1600

100 to 1600

100 to 6400

AF-S DX 18-135mm
f/3.5-4.5G IF-ED

N/A (body only)

Zuiko ED 14-42mm f/3.5 - f/5.6;
Zuiko ED 40-150mm f/4 - f/5.6DA* 18-55mm f/3.5-
f/5.6

N/A (body only)

3fps up to 100 shots

6fps to card capacity; 8fps
with optional battery pack

3fps to card capacity

3fps to card capacity

5fps to card capacity

30 to 1/4,000 seconds

30 to 1/8,000 seconds

60 to 1/4,000 seconds

30 to 1/4,000 seconds

30 to 1/8,000 seconds

11x16 inches

12x18 inches

11x15 inches

11x16 inches

12x18 inches

Shooters ready for a
user-friendly, semi-
pro camera that
balances auto and
manual controlsPhotographers who
want a camera with
plenty of features and
modes to play withUsers who want to
see exactly what
they're shooting, with
the aid of Live View
technologyUsers who want
shake-reduction built
into the body so it
works with most
accessory lensesExperienced photog-
raphers who are ready
for more advanced
features and power

\$1,299.95

\$1,799.95

\$999.99




\$899.99

\$1,399.99






*These lenses are for DSLR cameras, and thus, there's no established equivalent to optical zoom. Talk to your Best Buy Digital Imaging specialist for more information.

Which Digital Camcorder Is Right For You?

Digital camcorders come in a number of formats: DVD, hard drive, MiniDV, and high definition are the most common. By comparing the following digital camcorders available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com), you can determine which format and product best fit your style.

		DVD		Hard Drive
				
		8227509	8225716	8587585
		Panasonic VDR-D310	Canon DC230	JVC Everio Hybrid Camera GZ-MG130
What It Is	What It Means			
LCD screen size	Diagonal length of viewing screen	2.7 inches	2.7 inches	2.7 inches
Optical zoom	The number of times the lens can enlarge or reduce the field of view; the better type of zoom	10X	35X	34X
Digital zoom	The number of times the camcorder can magnify a portion of an image; may result in loss of resolution	700X	1,000X	800X
Recording speeds	The type of speed and maximum amount of time that can be recorded in each	XP SP LP	XP SP LP	Ultra Fine Norm Eco
Memory card	Type of flash memory cards compatible with the camcorder (cards not included unless noted)	SD/SDHC	miniSD	SD/SDHC
Digital still resolution	The number of megapixels the camcorder can capture in still images	3.1MP	1.07MP	N/A
Lines of resolution	Number of lines of horizontal resolution; the higher the number, the greater the detail	480	525	525
Weight	Weight of the camcorder (without battery)	1.1 pounds	0.89 pounds	0.71 pounds
Perfect for		A beginner who needs an easy-to-use camcorder	Users who like to use zoom to catch any action	Beginners who don't want to mess with discs or cassettes
Coolest feature		Automatically seeks out blank space on your DVDs to record new footage	Image Stabilizer will reduce camera shake, leaving you with crisp video	High-speed USB port lets you transfer video quickly
MSRP		\$699.95	\$449.99	\$499.95

High Definition

	High Definition				
	Hard Drive		Mini DVD	DVD	
					
	8346159	8225066	8495791	8220061	8408118
	Sony Handycam HDR-SR5	JVC Everio HD GZ-HD7	Canon HG10 HD Camcorder	Canon HV20 HD Camcorder	Canon HR10
	2.7 inches	2.7 inches	2.7 inches	2.7 inches	2.7 inches
	10X	10X	10X	10X	10X
	80X	200X	200X	200X	200X
	XP HQ SP LP	HQ-VBR LT-VBR CBR	XP+ XP SP LP	SP LP	XP+ XP SP LP
	Memory Stick Duo and PRO Duo	SD	miniSD	miniSD	miniSD
	4MP	2.1MP	3.1MP	3.1MP	2.07MP
	1,080 (i)	1,080	1,080	1,080	1,080
	1.2 pounds	14.4 ounces	1.1 pounds (without lens)	1.1 pounds	1.2 pounds
	Those who want an easy-to-use high-definition camcorder	Anyone who loves high-def shooting	Those who don't want to carry recording media	Anyone who loves to combine form and function	HD movie buffs
	5.1-channel surround sound for excellent audio	The ability to play back video in true high definition	A built-in HDMI terminal ensures your HD video won't degrade during transfers	HD CMOS sensor captures HD video on the 40GB hard drive in vibrant color	HDMI connector lets you output HD video
	\$1,099.99	\$1,699.95	\$2,198	\$999	\$1,199.99

Which Photo Printer Is Right For You?

If you print digital photos at home frequently, or would like to, then a dedicated photo printer may be a better option than an all-in-one. Photo printers at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) offer a variety of features in a wide range of prices.



8452569



8339531



8596815

What It Is	What It Means	Epson PictureMate Dash	Epson Stylus Photo 1400	Canon PIXMA iP4500
Photo print speed	How fast it can print one image	37 seconds (4x6)	46 seconds (4x6)	21 seconds (4x6)
Resolution	Dots per inch (or dpi)—the more, the better	5,760 x 1,440	5,760 x 1,440	9,600 x 2,400
Ink cartridges	How many cartridges the printer uses	1	6	2
Paper sizes	Sizes of paper compatible with the printer	Wallet, passport, 2x2, 3x3, 4x6, and more	4x6, 5x7, 8x10, 8.3x11.7, 8.5x11, 11x14, and more	4x6, 4x8, 5x7, 8x10, letter, legal, credit card, and more
PC-free printing	The ability to print images directly from camera	Yes	Yes	Yes
Memory card	Type of memory card the computer can accept and recognize	CompactFlash, Microdrive, Memory Stick, SD, SDHC, MMC, xD-Picture Card	No	No
Wireless connectivity	The ability to communicate with other peripherals with no wires	Yes, with optional Bluetooth adapter	Yes	Yes
Dimensions	Height x width x depth	8.7x6.5x9.1 inches	16.3x24.2x31.6 inches	6.3x11.9x17.5 inches
Perfect for		Photographers who want to print on the road	Users who need to print on a variety of paper types	Those who want photos with top-quality resolution
Coolest feature		3.6-inch LCD photo viewer	The ability to print labels directly on CDs and DVDs	Auto-Image Fix for flawless photos
MSRP		\$99.99	\$349.99	\$129.99



8030631

Canon PIXMA Pro9000



8353845

HP Photosmart D7260



8354194

HP Photosmart A627



8250304

Kodak EasyShare 5300 All-In-One



8250288

Kodak EasyShare 5500 All-In-One

30 seconds (4x6)	36 seconds (4x6)	39 seconds (4x6)	28 seconds (4x6)	28 seconds (4x6)
4,800 x 4,800	4,800 x 1,200	4,800 x 1,200	4,800 x 1,200	N/A
8	6	1	2	2
Letter, legal, 4x6, 4x8, 5x7, 8x10, 13x19, and #10 envelopes	Letter, legal, 4x6, 5x7, 8x10, iron-on transfers, banners, and more	3x5, 3.5x5, 4x6, 4x8, 4x12, and 5x7	A, A4, 3x5, 4x6, 4x8, 4x12, 5x7, 6x9, 8x10, and 11x14	A, A4, 3x5, 4x6, 4x8, 4x12, 5x7, 6x9, and 8x10
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No	Compact Flash I & II, MMC, SD, Memory Stick/Duo, Smart-Media, xD-Picture Card	CompactFlash, Memory Stick/Duo, MultiMediaCard, mini SD, xD-Picture Card	CompactFlash, SD, MMC, Memory Stick, Memory Stick PRO, xD-Picture Card, Microdrive	N/A
No	Yes, with optional Bluetooth adapter	Yes, with optional Bluetooth adapter	Yes	Yes
7.6x26x14 inches	5.7x5.1x17.1 inches	4.8x9.8x4.5 inches	8.8 x18.8x14.7 inches	11.3x18.8x16.4 inches
Photographers who want professional-grade prints	Those who want a small, unobtrusive photo printer	Scrapbookers who need prints on the fly	A home-office user on a budget	Users who need a multitask photo printer
Energy Star-qualified device	Easy print control via 3.5-inch touchscreen LCD	Photosmart software will help you achieve the best photo results	Photo prints cost 10 cents with Kodak Value Pack (not included)	Built-in card slots let you print photos quickly and easily
\$499.99	\$149.99	\$149.99	\$199.99	\$249.99

Digital Imaging Glossary

Are you confused about what that lingo on camera boxes means? Use this glossary to help decode the world of digital photography.

aperture—An iris-like diaphragm opening that can expand and contract the lens to let you control the amount of light that passes through it, thus affecting the exposure. The term “f-stop” is used interchangeably with aperture.

burst mode—Where the camera can take several shots (up to 10) consecutively, usually in one second.

CCD—A charge-coupled device is the camera’s image-sensing component. It converts light into energy that can be stored as digital data on your camera.

depth of field—The area that is in focus in front of and beyond the subject of your photo.

digital zoom—Magnifying an image digitally by cropping it and filling in the rest with interpolated pixels, thus degrading the quality. Even if the numbers are impressive, never choose a camera based on digital zoom.

f-stop—See aperture. Smaller f-stop numbers mean a wider lens opening; larger f-stop numbers mean a narrower lens opening.

ISO—For digital cameras, the ISO setting measures the sensitivity to light (similar to how it does with film). Digital camera ISO settings, such as 200, 400, etc., should capture photos as if one were using film with such a speed. Lower ISO settings mean you need more light, and vice versa.

LCD (liquid-crystal display)—The screen on the back of the camera that lets you see a live-action view of your subject, your photo after you’ve taken it, or both.

lens—The apparatus on the front of the camera that gathers and directs light toward the imaging device. In a digital camera, the lens probably has both an optical and digital zoom.

megapixel—Approximately 1 million pixels. The higher the megapixel count, the higher the resolution and the more you can crop, which means (in general) better-quality photos.

memory card—Because digital cameras have very little onboard memory, they need a flash memory card to store more than a dozen or so images. The type of memory card you need depends on the make and model of your camera. Some of the most popular memory cards are Secure Digital, MultiMediaCard, Compact Flash, and Sony Memory Sticks. In general, memory cards are quite small.

noise—The small statistical variations among pixels that lead to (usually) minor distortions of color in a photo.

optical zoom—The camera’s mechanical ability to move the lens physically closer to your subject. With optical zoom, the higher the number (such as 5X or 10X), the better. When choosing a camera, always consider the optical zoom, not the digital zoom. Digital zoom artificially adds pixels.



resolution—The number of pixels in an image. The higher the resolution, the more detail and quality in a photo. Resolution is measured in a proportion (such as 2,272 x 1,704).

shutter—A mechanism that opens and closes to allow light to pass through the lens. You can usually control the camera’s shutter speed.

shutter speed—The length of time a camera’s shutter is open to let light through the lens to hit the sensor, which records the image. This is expressed in fractions of a second: For instance, a shutter speed of 1/250 means that the shutter speed is 1/250th of a second.

viewfinder—The small opening in the camera that the user looks through to frame a shot. Some digital cameras don’t have a viewfinder and rely on using an LCD to frame the shot.

white balance—Light levels are adjusted electronically to ensure whites in a certain environment are pure, leading to more lifelike colors. White balance can usually be manually adjusted, too.

Accents & Accessories

It's The Little Things That Mean So Much

Accessories in the computer world work much as they do in the fashion world. No matter what you start with, it can always be a little bit better with the right mix of accessories. Whether you just want to make sure your

computer (or computer room) looks a little bit better or operates a little more smoothly, you're sure to find something you like in this must-have list of accessories. **FG**

BY TRACY BAKER



IOGear Wireless USB Hub & Adapter Kit GUWH104KIT

\$199.95 • www.iogear.com

USB is old news. Wireless connections are old news. IOGear has combined both of those technologies to create an exciting, new device—a USB hub that lets four devices that normally connect to the computer using USB cables connect wirelessly instead. That goes for digital cameras, USB printers, PDAs, and cell phones, among others. With few exceptions, as long as a device has a USB port, you can use it from 30 feet away without using cables.

Perfect For: Helping you cut down on a ton of clutter.



Memorex Cool Color CD-R 80 LightScribe 20-pack Spindle

\$17.99 • www.memorex.com

If you're going to burn some CDs for use in your car, they may as well look good, and LightScribe technology is the best way to dress up your tunes. Drives that support LightScribe can etch words and pictures directly into the upper surface of the disc for truly custom labels, but it works only with compatible discs such as these. Memorex takes style a step further by offering discs in five colors: red, orange, yellow, blue, and green.

Perfect For: Organizing data or music by type or just for spicing up your CD case.

Logitech QuickCam Pro 9000

\$99.99 • www.logitech.com

Carl Zeiss optics are often reserved for pricey cameras (digital or otherwise), but here's a Web cam that incorporates the coveted glass lenses. Coupled with a zippy autofocus that uses face-tracking technology, you end up with clarity that most people wouldn't expect from a Web cam. The QuickCam Pro 9000 has a built-in microphone so you won't have to set up additional hardware to capture sound, and the device comes with enough software that you'll never run out of fun things to do with all the video you capture.

Perfect For: Edgy types who see Web-cam footage and think, "Art."



Wenger SwissGear Synergy

\$70 • www.wengerna.com

Let's face facts: Laptops are a pain to lug around. Traditional cases put all the weight on one side of your body and have too few pockets for other essential items, such as cables and spare batteries. The Synergy from Wenger's SwissGear line solves both of these problems by integrating a padded computer pocket into a roomy backpack that can accommodate your laptop plus books, laptop accessories, or nearly anything else you'd ever need to carry. Laptops with screens up to 15.4 inches wide (diagonal) will fit.

Perfect For: A pack rat who wants pockets for a digital music player and cell phone, as well as for power adapters, spare batteries, and cables.



Plantronics .Audio 480 USB Virtual Phone Booth

\$109.95 • www.plantronics.com

Quality earbuds are great for isolating outside sounds and improving the clarity of your audio, but most are meant only for music playback. The Plantronics .Audio 480 USB provides all the benefits of earbuds and also has an integrated microphone so you can transmit audio in addition to just listening. The USB connector makes it easy to plug the .Audio 480 into a laptop for everything from making Internet calls to watching movies.

Perfect For: Those times you need to multitask instead of simply relaxing and listening.





Bush Tuxedo L-Desk—Hansen Cherry

\$249.99 • www.bushfurniture.com

Now that flat-panel screens are the norm, who needs a huge desk that takes up a lot of space? Instead, think about something more streamlined, such as Bush's Tuxedo L-Desk, which is available in a variety of finishes including Hansen Cherry. There's plenty of desktop space for your monitor, paperwork, and accessories thanks to the L-shaped design, and two big drawers plus a smaller drawer next to the slide-out keyboard tray will help you keep the work area tidy. You can tuck bulky computer towers inside another compartment designed specifically to accommodate them.

Perfect For: A room that demands a more traditional writing desk as opposed to a messy computer desk.



Netgear Powerline Networking Kit XEPSB103

\$129.99 • www.netgear.com

Wireless networks are great . . . when they work. If you want reliability without having to drill holes in the wall to string network cable throughout your home, consider the Netgear Powerline Network Extender Kit XEPSB103, which turns your existing electrical outlets into network ports. Connect one of the included adapters to your existing network equipment, plug it in to a handy outlet, and enjoy fast, reliable Internet access through any other power outlet in the house using the other included adapter.

Perfect For: Beautiful, older homes with plaster walls that would be ruined if you had to drill holes in them.



Microsoft Natural Wireless Laser Mouse 6000

\$79.95 • www.microsoft.com

Bend your arm at the elbow and you'll see that your wrist is most comfortable when your hand is tilted instead of flat. The Microsoft Natural Wireless Laser Mouse 6000 has a tilted surface to put your wrist in this natural position when using the computer, and an oversized thumb rest makes the device even more comfortable. It also doesn't skimp on features. You can click the scroll wheel to instantly minimize all windows and show an empty Desktop or use the dedicated Magnifier button to get a closer look at what is under the mouse cursor. A battery life indicator also tells you when it's time to change the included AA batteries for a fresh set.

Perfect For: The ergonomically challenged who are tired of wrist pain.

Computer Shopping Tips

Buying A Notebook Bag

BY TARA SIMMONS

M

ost people buy a notebook computer because of its portability, so deciding on a case in which to carry your notebook is important. Here are some things to keep in mind when shopping for a notebook computer bag.

First, determine where you'll be toting your computer. If, for instance, you regularly take it on business trips, you may want a bag that doubles as a briefcase. Choose a case with wheels or a sturdy shoulder strap if you'll be dashing through airports or between conference meetings. If, on the other hand, you occasionally take your notebook to the local coffee shop, a well-padded sleeve that can slip inside a large purse or serve as enough protection on its own will do the trick.

No matter what kind of case you choose, protection is key. Make sure that the bag or case is robust enough to stand up to the everyday jostling and bumps or even drops it'll be subjected to, especially if you'll be using it a lot. In particular, we like the Tote Notebook Case from Liz Claiborne (\$79.99; www.bestbuy.com) for everyday use; it includes a padded sleeve for added protection and multiple interior pockets so you can conveniently stow accessories.

Choosing a case with several compartments is a good idea. A designated pocket for a power cord or mouse will keep your items organized and more secure. Cramming all of your computer components

into a single space increases the chances that, say, the prongs of the power cord will scratch the exterior of your notebook.

Write down your notebook's dimensions before you go shopping (many bags will be sized by a notebook's diagonal screen size), or even take your laptop with you so you can be sure it will fit snugly in the bag—there should be little room for your notebook to slide around inside the bag. Make sure a case is manageable, too (both in size and weight). Even if you get the most protective case on the market, it won't do you any good if it's too heavy or bulky to actually utilize.

Another thing to consider is appearance. If all you care about is rugged protection, this aspect likely won't matter to you very much. However, appearance means more than just matching your personal style—it can also mean extra security. For example, choosing a case that looks like a large purse or carry-on bag may help camouflage your notebook. If your bag doesn't advertise the fact that it's holding an expensive computer, it's less likely that someone will try to steal it.

SHOPPING CHECKLIST

☐ Where will you take your computer?

- ☐ Extended business trips
- ☐ Short trips

☐ How much protection will you need?

- ☐ A hard exterior and padding within
- ☐ Light padding
- ☐ Soft exterior with extra padding inside

☐ Does the bag have compartments?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

☐ How big is your notebook?

- ☐ Height
- ☐ Width
- ☐ Depth
- ☐ Screen size

☐ Notes

CUT HERE

Notebooks

5 Must-Have Accessories

A

laptop is a big investment, and now that you've taken the plunge, it's time to decide what you need to go along with your shiny new purchase. We've rounded up five of our favorite accessories that every laptop owner should add to her shopping list.



1 Laptop Bag: After splurging on a laptop, the first thing you need to consider is how you're going to protect it. You bought a laptop for its portability, so it's important to buy a good case that can protect it and keep it mobile. Cases are available in a multitude of styles and colors, so you're sure to find one that meets your needs. We like the Swiss Gear Granada Wheeled Computer Case (\$99.99; www.wengerna.com), which has wheels and a telescoping handle for easy mobility, accommodates 15- and 17-inch widescreens, and has room to store all of your accessories and paperwork.

2 Cordless Mouse:

Although laptops are well-suited for working on the go, the pointing stick (that little nub in the middle of the keyboard that lets you navigate the pointer)



and/or touchpad that replace your desktop's mouse can be hard to manipulate. If you prefer a mouse, check out Logitech's VX Nano Cordless Laser Mouse for Notebooks (\$69.99; www.logitech.com). The sleek design makes it easy to transport, and the USB receiver is small enough to leave plugged in, so your mouse is ready when you are.



3 Surge Protector: Plugging your desktop's power cord into a surge protector was probably a no-brainer. But have you taken the same precaution to protect your laptop? Surge protectors ensure that the electrical current running to the device(s) attached to it doesn't exceed acceptable levels. A sudden spike in electricity can destroy a laptop, so taking the time to plug in to one every time is worth the few seconds it takes. Surge protectors designed specifically for laptops, such as the Kensington Notebook Power Adapter (\$139.99; us.kensington.com), are compact, making them easy to pack away in your laptop bag.



4 USB Hub: USB ports are necessary for connecting all sorts of electronic goodies to your computer, but what if you have more gadgets than ports? A USB hub, such as Dynex's 4-Port USB 2.0 Hub (\$19.99; www.bestbuy.com), is an affordable way to ensure you can connect all of your peripherals. In addition to giving you more ports, cords to items such as a digital camera or music player can be left plugged in on your desk, so they are ready to go next time you use your laptop.



5 Extra Battery:

We love laptops for their portability—they let us work without being tethered to a desk. But that flexibility is limited to how long the battery holds a charge. Having an extra battery on hand that's powered and ready to go gives you the ability to work longer, without having to find an outlet. Batteries vary from laptop to laptop, but with your model number in hand, you can find a replacement for any brand. **FG**

BY JOY MARTIN

Computers

Top 5 Things To Know



No matter what your skill level, there are a few basics you should know in order to enjoy the most productive, safest computing experience possible. Here are our Top 5.

BY JENNIE SCHLUETER

1 Prevent data loss.

If you're in the market for a new computer, it's smart to know exactly what extras you're going to want or need to go with your big purchase. Besides the keyboard, mouse, monitor, and tower, you'll want to get a good surge protector. This will keep your new investment safe from damage as a result of a power outage or electrical surge. Even better than a surge protector, a UPS (uninterruptible power supply) has a backup battery that will keep power flowing smoothly for a few minutes after an outage. This will give you time to save your work and properly shut down the computer to avoid data loss.

2 Protect yourself.

If you plan to go online, antivirus and firewall software are two must-haves for computer protection. There are many third-party products available for both antivirus and firewall protection, but you may elect to use built-in programs such as Windows XP's firewall or Vista's Windows Security Center. (Built-in antivirus is not available with WinXP or Vista.) Regardless of what protective software you decide to use, make sure you keep it enabled and set to the product's recommended settings. The trick to ensuring your firewall and antivirus do their jobs is that you have to keep them up-to-date. Most programs have a method for allowing you to manually (or your computer to automatically) check for updates so the software can detect new viruses, scams, and other threats.

3 Perform backups.

Even if you have been vigilant about performing routine maintenance, you'll likely experience a computer crash at some point. Whether it's a problem with your operating system or a burned-out hardware component, unless you have backed up the information, you may not be able to retrieve it—ever. Avoid this headache by scheduling regular backups. Once you've backed up your files and/or hard drive to an external drive, copy important files to a DVD and further secure your important data by storing it at an offsite location.


4 Consult an expert.

If you have a computer problem you can't fix, find help. Clicking through error messages or putting up with slow processing speeds is annoying and can be a sign of a larger problem. Before you lose your valuable time and data, get a professional to straighten things out. There are many options, including Best Buy's Geek Squad (www.bestbuy.com/geeksquad). This 24-hour technology support task force offers carry-in, phone, and onsite support. The squad also makes house calls.

5 Budget for extras.

Shopping for new computers these days is pretty tempting. It's easy to find a system for around \$500, but don't let that low number fool you. Remember that owning a computer comes with some additional expenses. For starters, some computers at the sub-\$500 price point don't include a monitor, so you'll need to remember to include one in your budget. Also, if you don't already have a printer or USB cable for your printer, you'll need to include this, too. Another thing to consider is your monthly ISP fee, and looking into whether you'll have to pay for a high-speed modem and installation or if they're included. Other extras could include productivity software such as Microsoft Office (you won't get this with a sub-\$500 PC, either), security software subscription fees, printer ink and paper, and a digital camera.

Glossary Of Computing Terms



Shopping for a computer can be intimidating, especially with all of the complex terminology. Here, we explain some common computer jargon.

Bluetooth—A short-range wireless standard that connects devices, such as computers, printers, PDAs, and digital cameras. It allows these devices and their users to communicate with one another.

broadband—Network connections that transmit high-speed Internet access. Cable companies can offer network speeds up to 8 to 11Mbps (megabits per second), whereas phone companies offer DSL (Digital Subscriber Line), which can support maximum speeds of 3 to 5Mbps. And, although not widely available, some power companies are exploring the possibility of offering high-speed Internet access to their customers, as well.

CRT (cathode-ray tube)—An old analog display technology for TVs and computer monitors. It features an electron gun illuminating phosphor dots that line the inside of a glass tube. When the phosphors are lit, they display on-screen images. CRTs consume a great deal of power and are heavy and bulky. Although many CRTs support digital signals, they degrade when converted to analog.

dual-core processor—This integrated circuit, which controls the computer,

features two processors, each with its own cache, on a single die or chassis. In a dual-core configuration, the operating system has two processors to handle instructions, speeding up the computer and its ability to multitask.

Ethernet—A widely used LAN protocol in which computers and networks are physically linked.

firewall—Hardware or software that limits access by a network or another outside source to your computer; it also may limit your computer's access to the network. These security measures are designed to protect your computer from outsiders who'd like to exploit it in some way. By the same token, firewalls may prevent infected files on your computer from accessing the larger network and spreading the problem to other users.

LAN (local-area network)—A group of computers that are physically connected by wires so they can communicate with one another and share information.

LCD (liquid-crystal display)—This digital display technology sandwiches liquid crystals between thin sheets of glass. The crystals twist and untwist to allow and block light from a backlight, forming the images you see. LCDs are thinner, lighter, and consume less power than CRTs. Initially used mostly in notebook PCs, you'll now find LCD TVs and computer

monitors, as well as LCDs on digital cameras, cell phones, portable DVD players, and PDAs, among others.

office suite—Productivity software, such as Microsoft Office, StarOffice, and Open Office, that often includes word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, database, and financial components.

operating system—The software, such as Windows XP, Windows Vista, or Mac OS X, that controls a computer and its peripherals and serves as the primary interface for the users.

processor—Also known as a microprocessor or the CPU (central processing unit), this integrated circuit controls the computer.

RAM—Random-access memory is a standard type of memory that's read from and written to by the CPU and hardware.

upgradeable—This term refers to the ability to add or swap out hardware to boost a computer's performance, increase its speed, or replace a defective or obsolete device or component. For instance, you may add more memory; replace an old CRT with a widescreen LCD; or swap out an older graphics card for a newer one that features an ATSC TV tuner so you can watch digital TV on your computer. Look for a computer with expansion slots or empty bays.

Which Notebook Computer Is Best For You?

A notebook computer is a pretty big purchase for most people, and it's usually a bit overwhelming, too. This chart compares the features and specs from several models available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) and recommends models based on certain lifestyles.



8647967

**Dell XPS
M1330**



8445836

Gateway T2080



8477141

**HP Pavilion
HDX9010NR**

What It Is	What It Means	Dell XPS M1330	Gateway T2080	HP Pavilion HDX9010NR
Operating system	The software (usually Windows or Mac OS X) that controls your computer	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Ultimate
Processor	The chip that controls the computer (in general, the bigger the number, the better)	1.66GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T5450	1.73GHz Intel Pentium Dual Core	2.2GHz Intel Centrino Core 2 Duo Mobile T7500
Hard drive size	How much information the computer can hold	160GB	120GB	240GB
Optical drives	Drives that can read and write discs such as CD-Rs, DVD-RWs, or HD DVDs	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	SuperMulti DVD±R/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW with LightScribe
RAM	Memory that is read from and written to by the processor and hardware; the more, the better	2GB DDR2	1GB	2GB PC-6400 DDR2
Screen size	The diagonal measurement of the notebook's screen	15.4 inches	17 inches	20.1 inches
Media card reader	A slot that lets you use media cards without a separate peripheral	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coollest feature		Imminent portability: It weighs less than 4 pounds	Built-in wireless to take advantage of hotspots	Integrated PVR (personal video recorder)
Perfect for		Those who want a powerful yet attractive laptop	Connected users on the go	Watching TV and movies on your laptop
MSRP		\$1,299	\$799.99	\$2,999.99



8670075

**HP Pavilion
dv9730nr**



8450259

**Sony VAIO
VGN-SZ650N/C**



8552853

**Toshiba Satellite
U305-S7446**



8398673

**Apple MacBook Pro
MA897LL/A**



8538807

Asus G1S-X3

Windows Vista
Home Premium

Windows Vista
Business

Windows Vista
Home Premium

Mac OS X 10.5
Leopard

Windows Vista
Home Premium

1.67GHz Intel Core 2
Duo T5450 Centrino

2.2GHz Intel Core 2
Duo Mobile

1.5GHz Intel Core 2
Duo Mobile T5250

2.4GHz Intel Core 2
Duo Mobile

2.2GHz Intel Core 2
Duo Mobile

320GB

160GB

160GB

160GB

160GB

Blu-ray Disc ROM
with SuperMulti
DVD±R/RW

Double-layer
DVD±RW/CD-RW

Double-layer
DVD±RW/CD-RW

Double-layer
DVD±RW/CD-RW

SuperMulti DVD±
RW/CD-RW with
LightScribe support

3GB DDR2

2GB PC2-5300 DDR2

1GB PC2-5300 DDR2
SDRAM

1GB PC2-5300 DDR2
SDRAM

2GB PC2-5300 DDR2
SDRAM

17 inches

13.3 inches

13.3 inches

17 inches

15.4 inches

Yes

Yes

Yes

No

Yes

Its 17-inch screen is
perfect for multi-
media viewing

Its weight; at 4
pounds, it's highly
mobile

DVD recorder with
double-layer support

Loaded with software

Nvidia GeForce Go
8600M GT graphics
card

Those who want to
watch TV on their
notebooks

Users who like to stay
connected to family
and friends

Users who like to
play with various
media

Mobile users who
appreciate wireless
connectivity

Gamers who also
want mobility

\$699

\$1,949.99

\$899.99

\$2,799

\$1,699.99

Which Desktop PC Is Right For You?

When you shop for a desktop PC, you'll see lots of similar deals. The comparison chart below shows how subtle—yet important—the differences can be. If you can't find one of these on Best Buy's Web site (www.bestbuy.com), visit or call your local Best Buy store, and it should be available there.



8649322



8643621



8602407

What It Is	What It Means	Gateway GT5656	Dell Inspiron 5315	Acer Aspire AM5630-U5209A
Processor	The chip that controls the computer (in general, the bigger the number, the better)	3GHz AMD Athlon 64 X2 6000+	2.3GHz AMD Athlon 64 X2 Dual-Core 4400+	Intel Core 2 Quad Q6600
Hard drive size	How much information the computer can hold	500GB	320GB	500GB
RAM	The memory a computer uses to run all PC applications	3GB	3GB	2GB
Optical drives	Drives that can read and write discs such as CD-Rs, DVD-RWs, or HD DVDs	Multiformat, dual-layer DVD±R/RW	DVD±RW	SuperMulti DVD±RW/CD-RW
Operating system	The software (usually Windows or Mac OS X) that controls your computer	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium
Loaded software	Preinstalled applications for performing specific tasks	MS Works 8 (doesn't include Microsoft Word)	MS Works 8 (doesn't include Microsoft Word)	MS Works 8.5, Adobe Reader 7, NTI CD Maker Gold
Graphics card	Controls the quality of your video and images	Nvidia GeForce 6150SE	Nvidia GeForce 6150 LE Integrated	ATI Radeon HD 2400
Ports	Sockets that give your computer access to different peripherals	6 USB 2.0; 2 FireWire; 1 parallel; 1 VGA; 1 Ethernet; and others	6 USB (2 front, 4 back); 1 DVI; 1 S-Video	6 USB 2.0; 1 FireWire
Best for		Managing and storing multimedia	Style-conscious users who like power	High-powered gamers
Coollest feature		Variety of ports for many peripherals	Integrates 7.1-channel sound	Its ability to handle multimedia tasks
Best Buy price (before any rebate)		N/A	\$599	\$749.99



8623778

**Velocity Micro
ProMagix T1000**

8649368

**Gateway
GM5664**

8647921

Dell XPS One

8542179

**HP Pavilion Elite
m9040n**

8539218

**HP Pavilion
Slimline s3220n**

	3GHz AMD Athlon 64 X2 dual-core	2.3GHz AMD Phenom 9600	2.2GHz Intel Core 2 Duo E4500	2.4GHz Intel Core 2 Quad Q6600	2.6GHz AMD Athlon 64 X2 dual-core
	500GB	1TB	250GB	640GB	400GB
	3GB	3GB	2GB	3GB PC2-5300 DDR2 SDRAM	2GB
	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	Hybrid Blu-ray Disc/HD DVD and Super-Multi DVD-RW	DVD±RW	SuperMulti DVD±RW/CD-RW with LightScribe	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW
	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Ultimate	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium
	Nero Burning ROM, 3D Mark 2006, Adobe Acrobat Reader 8.1	MS Works 8 (doesn't include Microsoft Word)	MS Works 8 (doesn't include Microsoft Word)	MS Works 8, muvee autoProducer, Roxio Creator, and more	MS Works 8, Adobe Reader 7, Roxio Creator, and more
	Nvidia GeForce 8500 GT	ATI Radeon HD 2400XT	Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 3100	Nvidia GeForce 8400 GS	Nvidia GeForce 6150 SE
	6 USB 2.0; 2 FireWire; 1 S-Video; 1 PCI-E x16	6 USB 2.0; 2 DVI; 8 audio; 1 S-Video and more	1 FireWire; 1 S-Video; 1 mini FireWire; 6 USB 2.0 mini	6 USB; 2 FireWire; 1 S-Video; 1 HDMI; 1 DVI; 1 TV-out	5 USB; 1 FireWire
	Users who need speed and space	Those excited to play Blu-ray Discs	Style-conscious users	Users who want expandable options	Budget-conscious buyers
	Its power-user case	Its analog/digital TV tuner	3GB RAM expandable to 8GB	Built-in 802.11b/g antenna for networking	Its small, compact design
	\$999.99	N/A	\$1,499	\$1,154.99	\$664.99

Accents & Accessories

Beauty & Spice To Make Your Music Player Nice

There's a poorly kept secret among portable music player makers that goes like this: Build a music player that truly engages all types of consumers, and third-party makers will come out of the woodwork to ornament the dickens out of it. Apple, for example, makes a nice chunk of licensing change by letting accessory makers attach the iPod name to the headphones, cases, skins,

car kits, speakers, docks, wireless add-ons, and other goods they sell. The following pages highlight several such products available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) that will let you accent and accessorize your music player. **FC**

BY BLAINE FLAMIG

SkinIt

\$14.95 • www.skinit.com

Odds are very good you've stuffed your music player with music representative of your tastes and personality. That's the idea behind SkinIt's customized skins for music players, as well as cell phones, notebooks, gaming consoles, and seemingly any other electronic device you throw SkinIt's way. The company organizes its hundreds of skins in nearly 20 categories and dozens of related subcategories. And if you can't find a skin that grabs you, upload your own design or photo to SkinIt's Web site and it'll return a photo-quality skin that screams "unique."

Perfect For: Individualistic owners who put a premium on personalization.



ADS Tech Instant Video To-Go Transfer Accelerator

\$79.99 • www.adstech.com

Although Instant Video To-Go resembles a USB flash drive, it actually encodes unprotected video clips on Windows XP PCs to several formats, including H.264, which video-playing iPods support. The device, which ADS says is the industry's first hardware-based video converter, encodes video to low, medium, and high qualities. In addition to iPods, players, such as the Sony Walkman Video, Archos Generation 5, and the new Zunes, natively support H.264.

Perfect For: Portable video buffs looking to shave time from the video-encoding process.





Sennheiser OMX70 Sport Earbuds

\$44.95 • www.sennheiser.com

Several companies stand out in audio circles for their consistent quality. Sennheiser is such a company. The quality in its OMX70 Sport comes in part from integrated neodymium magnets in each earpiece that produce stereo-quality audio. These buds are built for action, as their resistance to water and sweat illustrates, but Sennheiser hasn't skimped on comfort. Design touches include a durable yet flexible neckband and adjustable ear clips. Sennheiser includes a clip to keep the OMX70's flashy green cable in line, plus extra ear cushions, carrying case, and earpiece adapters.

Perfect For: Gym rats seeking a comfortable design that can also tolerate a little sweat.

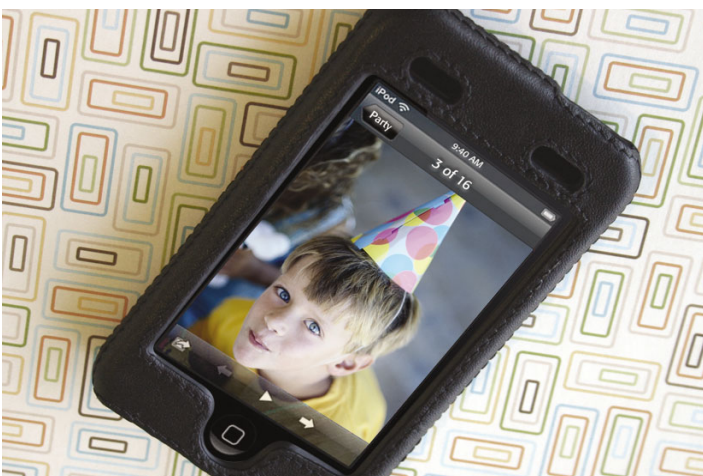


iHome Hidro-fi iH20W

\$69.99 • www.ihomeaudio.com

Common sense dictates keeping your music player a safe distance from water, right? Well, make an exception with iHome's Hidro-fi iH20W water-resistant speakers. Compatible with iPods (although not 3G models) and most other MP3 players via a Line-in connection, the Hidro-fi obtains mobile power from four AA batteries and stationary power from an included AC adapter, which will also charge your iPod. iHome also sports a headphone jack and includes a shower hook and attached loop to hang the speaker, which uses a Click Wheel-like navigation pad to control track selections and volume. Scrub-a-dub, indeed.

Perfect For: Aquatic audio lovers who want to mix music with water.



Griffin Elan Form Case

\$29.99 • www.griffintechology.com

In many ways, iPod owners are as diverse as the iPod models themselves. So, although you may be an extroverted iPodder who prefers flashy, eye-catching add-ons, your more reserved buddy may prefer understated iPod enhancements. Griffin's Elan Form cases for classic, touch, and 3G nano iPods fall in the latter category. Subtly attractive and using a dead-simple, two-piece design, the Elan Form stamps a leather top layer on an underlying polycarbonate shell, forming two layers of protection. The Elan Form also grants easy access to the Click Wheel, jacks, and USB port while including a static screen protector.

Perfect For: Owners of new iPods who prefer solid protection to flare.

HandStands iSticky Pad

\$8.99 • www.handstands.com

Ever place your music player on your car's dashboard only to see it ricochet off the passenger window when you took a corner too quickly? Us, too. What you and your dashboard need is an iSticky Pad (5.88 x 3.75 inches [HxW]). These player-savers are washable, bendable, removable, and reusable but won't leave behind residue or adhesives when removed, thanks to HandStands' patented technology. The pads come in black and white and work with any music player, as well as cell phones, keys, glasses, pens, and other potential projectiles. HandStands also sells an XL version (\$5.99; 7.5 x 5.88 inches).

Perfect For: Drivers who want a grounded (not airborne) music player.



Fellowes WriteRight Universal Screen Protectors

\$17.64 • www.fellowes.com

Dust, scratches, and glare—the constant enemies of music player owners everywhere. With Fellowes WriteRight's Universal Screen Protectors at the ready, though, you can at least safeguard your device's screen from these nasties. The protectors are also suitable for PDAs, cell phones, digicams, and other devices with LCDs. Fellowes packs 10 transparent screens, each measuring 3 x 4.125 inches. The screens feature measured cutting guidelines to precisely match your device's screen size, and Fellowes bundles a Squeegee-Card to iron out the wrinkles. The screens support stylus use, and they won't leave residue behind when removed.

Perfect For: Protecting your device's screen from the elements.



Dynex Headphone Splitter

\$8.49 • www.bestbuy.com

The road contains many hard lessons, including that long road trips and small children is a combustible mix. Even with a portable media player onboard that can play movies, such as the iPod classic, there's potential for fireworks if only one of your two children in the backseat can hear Nemo cracking wise at once. Enter the Dynex Headphone Splitter, which in addition to helping maintain in-vehicle peace, lets you attach two sets of headphones (or stereo speakers) to music players, notebooks, DVD players, and other devices with a 3.5 stereo jack. Ah, another lesson learned.

Perfect For: Those times when one set of headphones won't do.



Outfit Your Car With A GPS Device

Find The Direction You Want To Go



With the proliferation of GPS devices on the market, it's getting downright difficult to get lost on the road these days. They're everywhere, integrated in wristwatches and smartphones, but one of the most valuable places to have a GPS device is in your car. Whether you're headed across town or across the country, a GPS device will help you get there safely, and whatever your lifestyle, you can find a GPS device to meet your needs.

The Working Mom

Between commuting to and from work and carting her kids around to their various activities, Susan finds herself in the car quite a bit. Her schedule is tight, and she doesn't have time to get caught in a traffic jam, run into construction, or get lost on the way to an out-of-town karate tournament.

What to look for: Susan is definitely going to want a device that offers real-time traffic and construction reports so she can dodge any potential time killers; she'll want to pair that with rerouting features so she can quickly and accurately find an alternate route or detour.

She'll also want a GPS receiver that features POIs (points of interest) for when she needs to grab dinner for herself and half the soccer team on the road.

MODELS TO CONSIDER:

Cobra GPSM2100 Mobile Navigation System
\$384.95; www.cobra.com



Magellan Maestro 4250 North America
\$499.99
www.magellangps.com



MODELS TO CONSIDER:



Mio C520 DigiWalker Portable GPS Navigator
\$399.99
www.mio-tech.com/us

Garmin StreetPilot 2820
\$1,076.91
www.garmin.com



The Road Warrior

Dave frequently needs to visit project sites for his job, so he's constantly on the road. He's found that his car has become a sort of mobile office, where he's always on his cell and even holds meetings over the phone.

What to look for: Because Dave makes phone calls while driving, hands-free mobile phone capabilities are especially important. Real-time traffic updates save him time and frustration by helping him dodge congestion and road closings, and having POIs is valuable as he can easily locate restaurants and hotels when it's time to call it a day.

Those long hours in the car will pass more quickly with entertainment features on his GPS; he'll want a device with a music player or satellite radio (although a subscription is required for satellite radio).

The Conscientious Parent

Steve has three teenagers, all of whom currently are or will soon be driving. Concerned about their lack of experience behind the wheel, he wants to make sure they're as safe as possible while they learn to drive. Partly, he wants them to avoid getting lost, but his chief concern is that the kids are able to focus on driving without the distraction of a GPS unit to navigate by hand.

What to look for: Steve will want to buy a device that includes hands-free features, such as mobile phone calling, navigation, and audio command response, and the driving directions will need to come via voice so the kids won't have to look at the GPS' screen for guidance.

Of course, on occasion they'll need to peek at the screen, so it should be as large as possible (more than 5 inches is best) with a bright, backlit screen that is visible in direct sunlight. With a bright, large display, they can get the information they need from the screen quickly so they won't have to take their eyes off the road for very long.

MODELS TO CONSIDER:



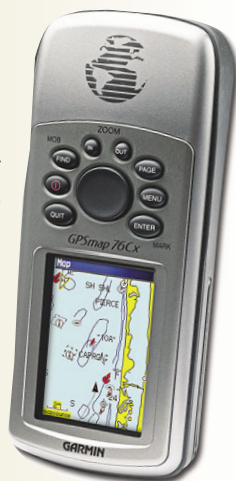
**Pioneer AVIC-D3 In-Dash Satellite
Radio-Ready/CD/DVD Player/GPS Receiver**
\$1,000; www.pioneerelectronics.com

**Kenwood DNX7100
In-Dash CD/DVD
Player/GPS Navigation**
\$1,800
www.kenwoodusa.com



MODELS TO CONSIDER:

**Garmin 010-00468-00
GPSMAP 76Cx GPS Receiver**
\$428.56; www.garmin.com



**Garmin 010-00629-06
eTrex Legend HCx**
\$289.27
www.garmin.com

The Outdoor Adventurer

Whenever she has a free weekend, Jen likes to get out of town and back to nature. Because she explores new territory, she needs a GPS device that'll get her down unfamiliar winding back roads leading to trailheads and river put-in points. She also wants to take her GPS with her so she can find her way back if she decides to go off the trail.

What to look for: She needs a handheld GPS device that she can mount on her Jeep's windshield or dashboard and tuck into her jacket pocket. Because she's out in the elements, the unit should be lightweight and waterproof with a long battery life, and the screen should be backlit so she can read it in direct sunlight.

A smattering of other useful features for Jen's outdoor adventures that could be valuable in the car or on the trail include programmable waypoints so she can backtrack in rough terrain and recall saved routes, which will help her find her way back to more populated areas.

More Than Meets The Eye

GPS devices can do a lot more than just tell you where to go. They can help you be more productive, keep you safer, and even entertain you. Get the GPS device that will take you where you want to go. **FG**

BY SETH COLANER

Deck Out Your iPod

Choose The Perfect Accessories For Your Lifestyle



Homedics DocknParty
Speaker System
\$49.99
www.homedics.com

It might be said that the iPod revolutionized the portable music player industry and in doing so brought music on-the-go to the masses. And although once you purchase an iPod, you don't *need* anything else to enjoy it, it certainly doesn't hurt to have a few great accessories to extend the functionality of your new purchase. To help you get a feel for the countless accessories available for the Apple iPod (www.apple.com), here's a list of a few types of people and some accessories that fit their lifestyles.

Busy Parent

If you're a parent who finds herself always on the go, ensure your iPod is protected by investing in a good case. Cases come in an endless variety of styles, colors, and materials, but they'll all help keep your iPod safe. For example, the Jam Jacket from DLO (\$19.99; www.dlo.com) is a silicone case that includes a place to store your

earbuds and comes in models for the iPod classic, nano, touch, and iPod with video.

For those long family outings, an FM transmitter, such as the Griffin RoadTrip (\$89.99; www.griffintechology.com), can charge your dockable iPod while letting you enjoy your iPod's music collection through your car's stereo system.

Tuned-In Runner

If you're a runner and the owner of either an iPod nano or shuffle, an arm-band lets you enjoy your music during your workout. To take your workout a step further, check out the Nike Sports Kit for Apple iPod nano (\$29; www.nike.com). A wireless sensor sends information from your Nike shoes (sold separately) to your nano. You can record your time, distance, pace, and calories burned and then analyze your performance by syncing these results with your computer.

Tween

Kids of all ages enjoy sharing their music with others. Now tweens can make it fun with the I-DOG AMP'D from Tiger Electronics (\$29.99; www.hasbro.com), which is compatible with any iPod using the included cable. Dance along as I-DOG wags his tail, taps his foot, and shakes his head to the beat of your favorite songs.

In case the time and place aren't right for sharing music with a crowd, use a headphone splitter. The small cable plugs into any iPod, allowing two listeners to plug earbuds into the other end. And at less than \$10—Dynex (www.bestbuy.com) has a model available for \$8.49—it's an affordable way to share your tunes.

College Student

Although listening to an iPod in solitude is pleasant, some music just screams to be shared. And when you're in college, not just any portable speaker system will do. You need something with flare. The Homedics DocknParty Speaker System (\$49.99; www.homedics.com) has a compact design and includes five interchangeable faceplates, so you can change the look of your DocknParty on a whim.

The DocknParty is compatible with dockable iPods but also includes a line-in jack, so you can plug in your shuffle, too. If you're a shuffle owner and would prefer not to mess with a cord to attach your iPod to the DocknParty, Dynex sells a 30-pin dock adapter (\$9.99) that lets you use your iPod shuffle with products created for dockable models. **FG**

BY JOY MARTIN

Wireless Shopping Tips

Find The Perfect iPod For You

BY TESSA WARNER BRENNEMAN

W

ith the introduction of Apple's new line of iPods, it's easier to find a model that will suit your needs and budget. So, whether you want an extra kick at the gym or entertainment to get you through long trips, there is an iPod model out there for you. Take this page with you while you shop for your new iPod.

Capacity options for an iPod vary from 1 to 160GB. If you're a traveler who rides trains and waits in airports, you might want a player with a large storage capacity in order to have your music, movie, and picture collections at your fingertips. If you are a movie-lover, you may want something with a high storage capacity because video takes up more space than music or data. The 1GB shuffle (\$79; www.apple.com) holds 240 songs, which may be enough for your daily walk.

When you're considering what size iPod you want, think about how you plan to use it. iPod models range in size from the diminutive shuffle, which has a convenient clip, to the full-sized classic and touch. So, if you're looking for an iPod to inspire you as you train for that upcoming 10K, the shuffle or the nano are perfectly portable with their small, lightweight designs.

Your iPod battery should be able to work just as long and hard as you do. iPods that have high storage capacities, such as the 80GB/160GB iPod classic (\$249/\$349), have long-lasting batteries, as well, but remember that playing video drains the battery far more quickly than playing audio.

Take into account which multimedia features you'll need. If all you want to do is listen to your favorite podcasts and you have no interest in watching YouTube videos, don't pay extra for features you'll never use.

If you want to display photos and watch video, consider the size of the color display. The touch has the biggest screen (3.5 inches) of all iPods, and it includes touchscreen technology. The nano and the classic have 2- and 2.5-inch screens, respectively, which will suit the basic needs of video and photo display.

You'll find a range of accessories to help you get the maximum amount of enjoyment from your iPod. Speaker docks, such as Altec Lansing's inMotion iM600 Portable Audio System (\$149.95; www.alteclansing.com), let you share your music collection with friends and family. Also, Belkin's TuneBase FM with ClearScan (\$89.99; www.belkin.com) charges your iPod while you listen to songs in the car. You can also protect your iPod from water and scratches with a case such as the Waterproof Armor Series from H2O Audio (\$39.99 to \$49.99; www.h2oaudio.com), which features a specific case for each iPod style.

SHOPPING CHECKLIST

☐ What capacity do you want?

- ☐ 1 to 8GB
- ☐ At least 16GB
- ☐ 80 to 160GB

☐ Is size an issue?

- ☐ Small enough to take to the gym
- ☐ Small enough to fit in my pocket
- ☐ Size isn't really an issue

☐ What multimedia features can it handle?

- ☐ Music only
- ☐ Music, video, and photos
- ☐ Full-length movies, music, and photo collection

☐ What's my price range?

- ☐ Under \$100
- ☐ \$150 to \$250
- ☐ Up to \$500

☐ What accessories will I need?

- ☐ Armband
- ☐ Protective case
- ☐ Car adapter
- ☐ Speaker system

☐ Notes

CUT HERE

MP3 Players

5 Must-Have Accessories

Nailing down a list of must-have accessories for an MP3 player is tricky. Just because an iPod dock for the kitchen tops your list, for example, doesn't mean it even cracks an avid jogger's Top 5. Ultimately, though, five general categories stand out, although other notable accessories include extra batteries, cleaning kits, and Bluetooth adapters.

BY BLAINE FLAMIG

1

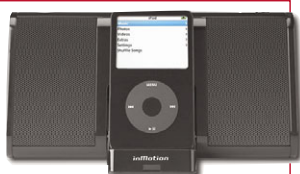
Headphones.

Sometimes a runner doesn't fare well with earbuds. They fall out due to the constant jostle of running, and this can become a burden for anyone hoping to get in a good workout. It's essential to match your earphones to your needs, or your experience will be diminished. A runner should opt for a headphone that's secure, and in this case, an in-the-ear earbud would be the ideal choice. Headphone styles are numerous and include wired/wireless earbuds, which are perfect for people on the go (students, mass-transit users), and earcups, which can satisfy any audiophile's need to hear minute musical details.

2

Speakers/docks.

Whether you want to add a nice ambience to the romantic dinner you cooked up for Valentine's Day or you need some musical inspiration as you stow the kitchen dishes away, there's no limit to where you can listen to your MP3 player. You needn't let the pair of headphones it came with constrain you, either; portable speakers and docks are perfect for letting the entire group listen to tunes in open areas. In addition, most speakers have a dock to recharge your player's battery. Check your MP3 player manufacturer's Web site for model numbers of available speakers and docks, and you'll likely be able to buy it at Best Buy.



3

FM transmitters.



If you're motoring about in a family van or Trans Am for leisure or work, MP3 players can provide the soundtrack for that motion. To do so, you'll need an FM transmitter that can beam your MP3 player's tunes over your car radio. Connect the transmitter to your player, select a designated frequency on the car radio dial, tune to that same frequency on your transmitter, and you are listening to music, movies, podcasts, audiobooks, etc. Transmitters range from basic (maybe offering three presets) to sophisticated models (providing remote controls and visual interfaces), making it easy to find one that suits your needs.

4

Cases.

You decided to treat yourself and buy a high-end MP3 player. Because you've already spent so much, it's only right to assume that you have everything you need, right? Not quite. Although they're partially a vanity purchase, cases can protect your player from scratches, bumps, water, physical drops, and mishaps that can otherwise shorten your player's life. No matter what type of MP3 player you own, it's wise to purchase a case to protect it in different environments. Cases are relatively inexpensive (around \$20 and up) and can provide a little more insurance against any accidents or normal wear and tear that can happen. Because not all cases will work with your player, check the MP3 player manufacturer's Web site or a retailer like Best Buy for ones that are compatible.

5

Armbands.

We all know that music is a huge exercise motivator. Although they're often overlooked, armbands can mean a difference between a workout you're proud of vs. one that's constantly interrupted by accidental drops and tugging, tangled cords. No matter your sport, an armband, such as DLO's Action Jacket for 3rd-Generation Apple iPod (\$29.99; www.dlo.com), which fits around your bicep, generally offers the most stability and comfort. Otherwise, a basic lanyard is an inexpensive, yet effective, alternative for less strenuous workouts.



MP3 Players

Top 5 Things To Know

Finding the perfect digital music player is all about asking the right questions. Here are the five most important things to keep in mind while shopping, along with the answers you'll want to hear before committing to a particular device.

BY TRACY BAKER

1 Memory capacity.

The capacities listed for most MP3 players are based on low-quality audio recordings, which result in small file sizes. Songs recorded at a higher quality, which is probably what you'll prefer and be listening to most often, will take up more space, so fewer songs will fit on your player. For example, a player can store three times as many songs recorded at 64Kbps as those at 192Kbps, but the sound quality for the 192Kbps tracks is more than three times better than that of the 64Kbps tracks.

Where storage is concerned, there are 8 bits in a byte, 1,024 bytes in a KB (kilobyte), 1,024KB in a MB (megabyte), and 1,024MB in a GB (gigabyte). If you record tracks at 192Kbps, divide that number by eight to get 24KBps. There are 60 seconds in a minute, so that means your audio requires about 1,440KB (1.41MB) of storage per minute or about 84.5MB per hour. Therefore, each gigabyte of memory will hold about 12 hours of 192Kbps audio.

2 Type of memory.

Hard drives offer relatively high storage capacities at a relatively inexpensive price, but they have a lot of moving parts that tend to break if you drop the device, which often ruins the player beyond repair. Flash memory (also called solid-state memory) is more expensive per megabyte and gigabyte than hard drives, but because the memory uses no moving parts, it is more durable. Devices that use flash memory are terrific for running and exercising or other activities where you may shake or drop your player.

3 File format support.

Just as digital photos and movies use a variety of file formats, so do digital audio files. You'll see MP3, AAC (Advanced Audio Coding), WMA (Windows Media Audio), and FLAC (Free Lossless Audio Codec), to name a few. If you have already converted or downloaded a large amount of music in a particular format, make sure the player you want can handle it. If not, you can tailor your conversions and downloads to match the capabilities of the device.

4 File downloads.

Due to DRM (digital rights management) schemes and other factors, to download most tracks from Apple's iTunes Store (www.itunes.com), you'll need an iPod. However, Apple does offer a select number of DRM-free tracks that will work with any MP3 player. Subscription-based services, such as Napster To Go (www.napster.com), let you download unlimited amounts of music, but they're only compatible with certain makes and models. On the other hand, Amazon's (www.amazon.com) music store won't keep you guessing about what music will play on your MP3 player; its entire music catalogue is DRM-free.

5 Battery life.

Official battery life measurements are performed in a lab and, as a consequence, don't always match real-world performance. First, ask the salespeople if they have any experience with the battery life of a product you are considering. Then, be sure to ask how long the batteries should last if you listen at a reasonable volume level (loud music consumes more electricity because the headphones require more power). Finally, you might also look for power-cutting options, such as the ability to turn off the screen's backlight and audio normalization (which tones down loud music).

MP3 Player Glossary

W

ho doesn't want an MP3 player? It can help you relax, provide motivation, and keep you up-to-date on news. When you head to your local Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) to snag one, make sure you have this glossary so you can choose the perfect model.

AAC—Short for Advanced Audio Coding, it is a competitor of the more popular MP3 file format.

Click Wheel—Apple's proprietary circular control on the front of the iPod.

download—In terms of digital music, downloading is when you retrieve a song from an Internet site or another network connection and save it to your computer or music player. You'll download songs from music service Web sites such as iTunes, Napster, or Rhapsody.

DRM—Digital rights management is a security mechanism for digital media. A common DRM scheme for digital music involves getting a license file to authorize playback of a free or purchased song.

earbuds—Small, circular devices you put into your ears that serve the same function as headphones. Music players come with their own earbuds, but you can, of course, purchase a separate pair that are more comfortable or of better quality.

flash memory—Solid-state memory with no moving parts that is lightweight and small. In terms of digital music players, a flash-based player is lighter and smaller than a hard drive-based player, and it also won't skip. Thus, flash-based players are popular for use during exercising. However, the capacity of a flash drive isn't as large as a hard drive.

FM tuner—In music players, a built-in FM tuner lets you listen to local radio.

hard drive—Storage in which rigid platters are inside a fixed casing. In terms of digital music players, a hard drive-based player is larger and heavier than a flash-based player. Because of the moving parts (the platters), hard drive-based players are also prone to skipping. However, the capacities are much larger than flash-drive capacities.

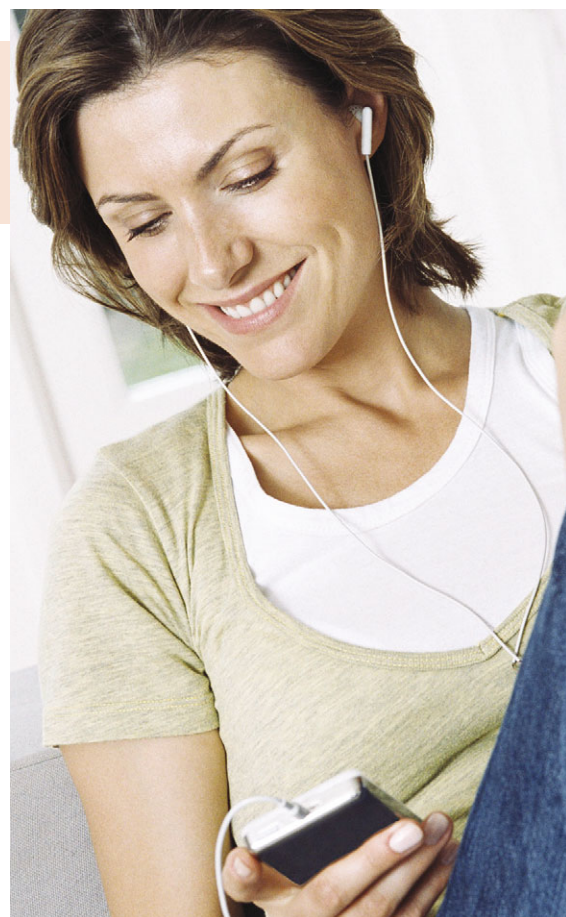
iTunes—A digital media player application that loads onto your computer and lets you play, organize, and download and purchase music, videos, podcasts, and television shows for a portable media player or computer.

MP3—Perhaps the most popular digital audio encoding format. It compresses audio to about one-twelfth the original size while still providing excellent sound. In general, a 1MB MP3 file will last about one minute.

playlist—A queue of songs a user creates to play on a computer, burn to a CD, or transfer to a digital audio player. The playlist includes only directions to the location of the songs, not the songs themselves.

PlaysForSure—A popular Microsoft certification that ensures portable devices, such as MP3 players, and media, such as digital music and videos, are compatible with each other.

podcast—A downloadable episode that is similar to a radio program. A user can subscribe to a podcast for



updated episodes, or she can download podcasts one at a time. A podcast is usually available in MP3 format.



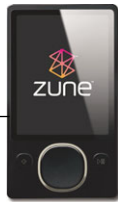
screen—The display on the front of a portable music player. A player's screen can either display in color or black and white.

WMA—Windows Media Audio is a digital audio format created by Microsoft to compete with the MP3 format. WMA files are smaller than MP3 files.

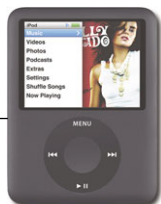
widescreen—A screen with a 16:9 aspect ratio. In terms of music players, the Microsoft Zune and the Creative Zen Vision W are two that have widescreens.

Which MP3 Player Is Best For You?

Pods are cool, sure, but you have other choices when it comes to listening to your tunes. This chart compares the most important—and coolest—features from select MP3 players available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com).

		Hard Drive		
		 8500357 Apple iPod classic	 8043654 Archos 604 WiFi	 8595978 Microsoft Zune 80GB
What It Is	What It Means			
Memory type	Hard drive (moving parts, more capacity) or flash (no moving parts, lightweight, perfect for exercising)	Hard drive	Hard drive	Hard drive
Capacities	How much memory the player has (on models available at Best Buy)	80GB; 160GB	30GB	80GB
Songs	How many songs the player can hold	20,000; 40,000 (based on 4-minute songs at 128Kbps AAC)	9,000 (based on 4-minute songs at 128Kbps WMA)	20,000 (based on 4-minute songs at 128Kbps WMA)
Video capability	Some MP3 players can play video, as well as music	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colors	Several players offer a variety of color choices	Black, silver	Silver	Black
FM tuner	Lets you listen to radio stations	No	No	Yes
Music services supported	Not all MP3 players can play songs from all music services	iTunes, Amazon MP3	Rhapsody, Amazon MP3	Zune Marketplace, Amazon MP3
Battery life	How long the battery will last when playing music	20 hours; 40 hours (music)	16 hours (music)	30 hours (music)
Perfect for		Those interested in a storage device as much as a music player	Wi-Fi ability lets you surf the Web and download files from your compatible PC	Users who enjoy sharing and discovering music
Coolest feature		It's an iPod: Need we say more?	4.3-inch, high-resolution touchscreen	Connect to your PC via your home network
MSRP		\$249; \$349	\$349.99	\$249.99

Flash



8500534

Apple iPod nano



8500393

Apple iPod touch



8452863

Insignia Pilot



8571379

Samsung P2



8553834

SanDisk Sansa Clip

	Flash	Flash	Flash	Flash	Flash
	4GB; 8GB	8GB; 16GB	4GB; 8GB	4GB; 8GB	2GB
	1,000; 2,000 (based on 4-minute songs at 128Kbps AAC)	1,750; 3,500 (based on 4-minute songs at 64Kbps WMA)	N/A	N/A	1,000 (based on 4-minute songs at 128Kbps WMA)
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Silver (4GB); Black, silver, red, blue, green	Black	Black	Black, white, burgundy	Black, red, pink, blue
	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	iTunes, Amazon MP3	iTunes, Amazon MP3	Best Buy Digital Music Store, Rhapsody, iTunes, Amazon MP3	Best Buy Digital Music Store, Rhapsody, Ama- zon MP3	Best Buy Digital Music Store, Napster, Rhap- sody, Amazon MP3
	24 hours	22 hours	25 hours	30 hours	64 hours (WMA)
	Joggers; iPod lovers who aren't interested in carrying their entire library with them	Users who want a chic-looking player that supports multiple A/V formats	Users who also want to listen to audible book downloads from Audible.com	Audiophiles who want to listen to their music wirelessly	Someone who wants a player that doesn't re- quire an accessory to wear on the go
	Diminutive size	Its 3.5-inch touch- screen	Built-in support for Bluetooth audio	Compatibility with var- ious music services	Its small LCD lets you pick and choose your tunes
	\$149; \$199	\$299; \$399	\$129.99; \$159.99	\$199.99; \$249.99	\$59.99

Which GPS Device Is Right For You?

One of the hottest CE devices around right now is a GPS device, and what a useful device it is, too: No more messing with paper maps or scribbled, handwritten directions when you're trying to navigate from point A to point B. Here, we compare some of the hottest models available on today's market. All of these units come with maps already loaded, and you can purchase additional maps, as well.



8308636

Magellan Maestro 4040



8539165

Garmin nüvi 750



7555754

Garmin nüvi 350

What It Is	What It Means	Magellan Maestro 4040	Garmin nüvi 750	Garmin nüvi 350
Screen size	The diagonal measurement of the screen	4.3 inches	4.3 inches	3.5 inches
Dimensions	Height x width x depth	3.75x5x0.9	3x4.8x0.8	3x4x1
Text-to-speech capability	Lets the unit call out specific street names	Yes	Yes	Yes
Battery life	How long the battery lasts	Up to 3 hours	Up to 5 hours	Up to 8 hours
WAAS (Wide Area Augmentation System) enabled	A system of satellites and ground stations that gives exceptional accuracy in some GPS devices	Yes	Yes	Yes
Built-in Bluetooth	Lets you communicate wirelessly with other Bluetooth devices	Yes	No	No
Included adapters for charging your device	An AC adapter plugs into the wall; a DC adapter plugs into your car's cigarette lighter	AC adapter, DC adapter	DC adapter	AC adapter, DC adapter
Coollest feature		Audio is clear, and volume control is excellent	MP3 and audio book players keep road trippers entertained	Route calculator finds the most efficient route between multiple destinations
MSRP		\$449.99	\$589.27	\$482.13



8512031

TomTom ONE XL-S


8540509

**Harman Kardon
GPS-310**


8230746

Garmin nüvi 680


8539478

**Mio DigiWalker
C720t**


8400198

TomTom GO 720

4.3 inches	4 inches	4.3 inches	3.5 inches	4.3 inches
3.4x4.7x1.2	2.9x4.75x0.75	2.9x4.9x0.9	3.2x5x0.8	3.3x4.6x0.9
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Up to 2 hours	Up to 5 hours	Up to 7 hours	Up to 4.5 hours	Up to 5 hours
No	No	Yes	N/A	No
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
DC adapter	DC adapter, AC optional	AC adapter, DC adapter	AC adapter, DC adapter	DC adapter
Included USB cable and charger let you charge the unit as you drive	All-in-one navigation and entertainment system that lets you play MP3/WMA files as you travel along	Garmin Lock disables the unit until you type in your 4-digit PIN or take the unit to a predetermined location	2MP digital camera; you can embed GPS coordinates into the images, too	Help Me! menu gives direct access to numerous safety and information options
\$399.95	\$299.95	\$857.13	\$599.95	\$499

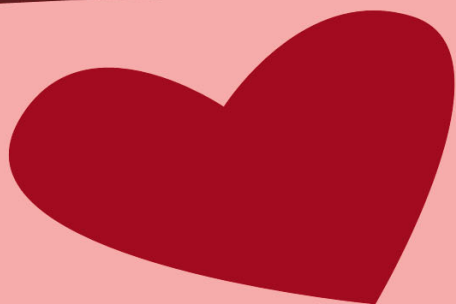
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ROMANCE IS AN ART, and it doesn't need to be watered down with candy, flowers, and stuffed animals clutching plush red hearts. Instead, we suggest you skip those cliché tokens of affection and keep the red-hot flame of romance burning with Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) products such as these.



Toast your love.

Revolutionary Cooling Systems
Cooper Cooler Rapid
Beverage Chiller
\$89.99



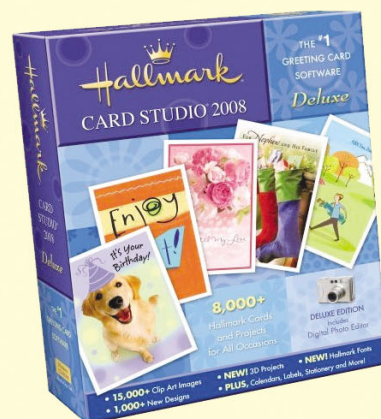
Sweets for your sweetheart.

Cuisinart Electric Fondue Set
\$49.99



Get cozy watching your favorite flicks.

Berkline Dolan Leather Sofa
\$1,499.99



Make the perfect valentine.

Hallmark Card Studio Deluxe 2008
\$39.99



**Navigate your way
into his heart.**

Intellinav Portable GPS Receiver
with MP3 Player and JPEG Viewer
\$299.99



exit

**Whisper them
sweet nothings.**

Motorola Wireless Headset for
Bluetooth-Enabled Cell Phones
(Model: 89216N)
\$79.99

**Never let them leave
the house without you.**

Coby Digital Photo Keychain
\$29.99



HoMedics MP3 Cush Music
Playing Massage Seat
\$49.99



HoMedics Envirscape Siena
Illuminated Relaxation Fountain
\$34.99



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Ultra Deep Kneading
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